

L E T T E R

TO

HENRY GRATAN, Esq. M.P.

&c. &c. &c.

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WILLIAM SMITH, Esq.

— “REVINXIT;
“IMMOTAMQUE COLI DEDIT.” —
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A very faint, large watermark-like illustration occupies the background of the page. It depicts a classical building, possibly a temple or a portico, featuring four prominent columns supporting an entablature and a triangular pediment. The entire image is rendered in a light, off-white color, blending with the paper's texture.

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TO

HENRY GRATTAN, Esq.

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SIR,

IT seems to me that the intelligent part of the Irish nation have a right, before they decide upon a matter in which their most valuable interests are involved, to expect that it should receive the amplest, and most complete discussion. No argument should remain untouched, no objection be left unanswered, which can throw light upon a question of such singular importance, as that which now engages, and indeed agitates the publick mind. Under the impression of this sentiment, I sit down for the purpose of addressing through you to my countrymen, such observations on the question of Union, as have been suggested to me by the perusal of a Speech lately published as yours, in the Dublin and Anti-Union Evening Posts.*

For many of those who are on the anti-union side, I feel the most sincere respect; and look on them to be such staunch friends to British connexion, that I am perswaded there must be moments when they doubt the expediency of an opposition, in which the worst enemies of Ireland concur: moments, when they almost recognise the salutary tendencies of a measure, against which separatists have raised their voices, to a man.

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* Of Saturday Jan. 18th, 1800. I do not undertake to animadvert on any thing which fell from Mr. Grattan in Parliament, but only on those positions which have been published in the newspapers under the sanction of his name.

I do not censure, I applaud, the generous sacrifice which they make, in not withdrawing that support which they think due to a just cause, though contaminated by the suspicious advocatism of treason. But I warn them, they are mistaken: the cause to which they are inadvertently lending their assistance, is the same which they have so lately defeated in the field. If they doubt me, let them look to the allies whom they have gained: let them ask themselves if the zeal which their new confederates evince, could be excited by any prospect short of separation?

These reflections have insensibly led me away; though not into topicks which can be deemed foreign, or irrelevant: I shall now enter, without further preface, upon the task which I have undertaken, and proceed with my examination of your printed speech, together with such matters as appertain to it, and to my subject. But before I engage in that free discussion which is before me, it may be right that I should disclaim all intention of giving you personal offence. I have nothing to do with your motives or designs; and your friends have my permission to balance, if they can, whatever mischief you may have done, with the good which you intended: I shall merely indulge in those animadversions on the tendencies of your political conduct, to which every publick man is accustomed to submit.

You open your attack on the measure which I support, with a multitude of assertions, which, as they are utterly unsupported, I persuade myself that it will not be difficult to put to rout.

"The British Minister," you inform us, "declares his intolerance of that parliamentary constitution of Ireland, which he ordered the several Viceroys to celebrate: now pronouncing that establishment to be a miserable imperfection, in defence of which he recommended the French war, and to which he swore the yeomanry."

Sir, that is not so: Mr. Pitt is so far from declaring his intolerance of that constitution, which he has concurred in commanding, that he seeks, by the proffered union, to protect it against the intolerance of those, who might prefer an establishment on the French model: nay he more than endures the independence, which makes a part of that constitution: he has expressly recognised it, and acted on this recognition: he has repeatedly and explicitly acknowledged the incompetence of the British Legislature to bind this country to an union, and the competence of our Parliament to reject the proposal: insomuch that though we should take so narrow a view of the subject, as to look to no part of the constitution of Ireland, but that which regulates its relations with Great Britain, we should yet be justified in asserting the consistency of Mr. Pitt; and insisting that the conduct of the English Government, with respect to union,

union, has not only amounted to a tolerance, but to a strong assertion of the independence which we acquired in 1782.

But the British Minister has at no time applauded the distinctness, which he now recommends us to abolish. His eulogy applied to principles which union will leave unimpaired: to theories which union will reduce to practice. He extolled the excellencies of the settlement of 1782; and left it to more depraved statesmen to celebrate its defects: he admired in it the blossom which should ripen into union; while others praised the canker which threatened separation. So far from commanding the brittleness of our connexion, I firmly believe that the British Minister had it in contemplation, at that period, to attempt the rendering this connexion less precarious. Meantime he did not call on us to rejoice that we were distinct; but, being distinct, to be thankful that we were independent.

If our Viceroys celebrated the constitution of 1782, it was not for any qualities which union will destroy. They contrasted it with that degrading system which had gone before; not with the preferable arrangement which is to come; and perhaps in no point of view would it have been more deserving of celebration, than if it were considered as preliminary to the measure which is now proposed for our acceptance.

That establishment which was the real object of the Minister's panegyric, he is so far from now pronouncing to be a miserable imperfection, that on the contrary the events which have lately passed in Europe have but served to encrease its title to his admiration. He has seen the lessons of ages compressed into the narrow period of a few years, and mankind enabled to learn that from their own experience, which it had heretofore been the province of history to teach. The foil of anarchy has made the lustre of our establishment more apparent; and, as in 1793 the French war was undertaken in its defence, in 1800 the Union is recommended for its protection.

Fear not, my good Sir, that the oath of the yeomanry should stand between that loyal body and the good of their country. Those who have not taken the obligation, may be excused if they are ignorant of its tenor and effect. Those who have, do not require to be informed that the King, Lords and Commons form the Legislature of this country: that the acts of this assembly are the law of the land; and that by the principles of that constitution, which as yeomen and subjects they are sworn to maintain, the sovereign Parliament, (however dissimilar the two statutes may be) is as competent to enact an union, as a road bill.

Following in your steps, and pretending to no better arrangement than that which the speech that I am answering has prescribed,

scribed, I now attend you to a subject on which you are entitled to be heard: I mean the final adjustment of 1782.

You make two charges against the British Minister: first you charge him with disclaiming the settlement of 1782;—and secondly, with maintaining that this adjustment was no more than an incipient train of negotiation.

The first branch of your accusation I hold to be unfounded; and as to the assertion which, in the second place, you have ascribed to the Minister, I am disposed to think it is one, in which the facts will bear him out.

If I can accomplish the refutation of your first charge, without controverting the statement which you have yourself made, it will be a point gained: for by agreeing on facts and premisses, we shall narrow the discussion, and prevent a waste of time. This is therefore what I shall attempt to do.

But I shall in the first instance examine, and endeavour to get rid of, what I conceive to be the least relevant and conclusive part of your argument; viz. that which consists in a denial of Mr. Pitt's assertion, that the settlement of 1782 was a mere (though most important) step in negotiation: a mere article in the intended treaty of perpetual amity and connexion; and that “it was in the contemplation of the British Government of “that day to adopt some *further* measures, proper to strengthen “the connexion between the two countries.”*

Towards disproving the truth of your denial, and demonstrating that Mr. Pitt was warranted in his position, I will ask of any candid and intelligent man—whether the following short statement would not suffice?

The only grievance complained of by Ireland, which it was the province of England to redress, (all the rest being matter for our own internal regulation,) was that which consisted in the claim of the British Parliament to make laws for this country. This claim was given up, in the way in which Ireland herself prescribed, by the repeal of the sixth of George I. † and *after* it had been so surrendered,—after the single link of our dependence had been thus cut,—“an address to his Majesty was “moved and carried, praying him to take such further measures “as to him seemed proper, to strengthen the connexion between “the two countries:” to which address “his Majesty's most “gracious answer, stating that he *would take such measures as “might be necessary for that purpose*, was delivered to the House by “a gentleman, who then filled” (an high office of trust in administration; viz.) “the office of Secretary of State.”§

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* See Mr. Pitt's Speech on Thursday January 31, 1799.

† And was afterwards to the satisfaction of the most squeamish, surrendered by the act of renunciation.

§ Mr. Pitt's Speech.

If the above enumeration of indisputable facts, (facts " public, registered and recorded," † as any on which you can rely,) does not sustain the British Minister's assertion, that after the grievances which Ireland complained of had been redressed, after her disputes with the sister country had been adjusted, it still " was in the contemplation of the British Government of " that day, to adopt some further measures proper to strengthen " the connexion,"—I for my part cannot conceive what is demonstration.

The sophistry is vain and paltry, which insinuates that a settlement may not be completely final to one intent, at the same time that it is strictly initiative to another: it is an abuse of reason, as well as of language, to infer that what concludes past controversy, must thereby preclude all future negotiation. The valetudinarian, who by medicine has brought one malady to a conclusion, is not precluded from changing his regimen to improve his constitution; and prevent his being attacked by another dangerous disease: the recovery which a man suffers in our courts of law, or the fine which derives its very name from its finality, is final and conclusive to bar a former entail, while it is preliminary to the further settlement, in contemplation of which it has been made, and which is to provide for the future comfort of the settler, and his descendants.

I dwell the more upon this topick, because I would prevent the possibility of its being attributed to those whose opinions I espouse, that they doubt the settlement of 1782 to have been final. It would be equally false, and mischievous, to deny that settlement to have been a final and irrevocable adjustment of all preceding disputes between the countries; but it is no less sophistical and pernicious, to pervert this finality into an obstacle to further measures, which the legislature may deem necessary for securing the permanence of the connexion: measures which, so long as they do not impugn the principle which Ireland then asserted, are compatible with the settlement that took place in 1782; and in no degree impede, or restrain its operation: measures which that settlement was, in my opinion, rather calculated to smooth the way for, than obstruct.

I shall not desert the strong ground of fact which I have taken, by shewing the probability which there was, that the British government should have in contemplation that, which the Minister says they had. If I did, I might enquire of any rational man whether, considering the situation of the two countries, it was not likely that the English ministry, having finally adjusted the question of Irish grievance, should proceed to the important question of British connexion, and adopt measures that were calculated to strengthen and secure it? whether they were not the

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† Mr. Grattan's words.

more likely to do so; if the control, which had been just renounced, (however offensive it might be to this country,) yet tended, with all its faults, to consolidate the empire, and therefore when relinquished, required to be succeeded by the substitution of a system, more compatible with Irish honour, and equally conducive to the interests of Britain?—But this would be to wander into superfluous investigation, by shewing that to be probable, which I had already demonstrated to be fact.

But with respect to this, as with respect to the other branch of your accusation, let me see how the case stands, even on your own statement.

“ The first tracts,” you say, “ of the adjustment of 1782 were two messages, sent by his Majesty to the Parliaments of the “ different countries:” in other words, the settlement of 1782 originated, by your own admission, with the advisers of the crown; that is to say, with the British administration. Now one would suppose that, towards ascertaining the measures of which any plan was intended to consist, we should examine the conduct of the persons who contrived it; and if we do so in the present case, the address and answer which have been already noticed, and which were both posterior to the repeal of the sixth of George I. will evince the truth of the Minister’s assertion, that further measures were in the contemplation of the Government of that day.

But again, supposing (according to the truth,) that the British Houses of Parliament were parties to this transaction, then what appears from your own statement? that having determined to surrender their claim to legislate for this country, the British Parliament, in the second place, resolved “ that the connexion between “ the countries should by mutual consent, be placed on a solid and “ permanent foundation.”*

Let any candid man attend to the import of this resolution, and say whether he can contradict the statement of Mr. Pitt, that it was in the contemplation of Government in 1782, towards strengthening the connexion between the countries, to adopt measures of the nature of that which is now proposed.

But you tell us that the address of the Irish Parliament, upon the consideration of these two resolutions, *expressly* rejects the second.

To support the statement which you have so boldly made, you should be able to read from this address, what I confess would be a very extraordinary paragraph; viz. that it was the humble opinion of his Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Irish Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled, “ that the connexion between the countries should *not* be placed, by mutual consent, on a permanent foundation.” Such a paragraph, I admit, would have supported your position, that the address *expressly* rejected the second British resolution.

But

* Mr. Grattan’s words.

But you are so far from shewing an *express* rejection, that you are utterly unable to produce an implied one. The Irish Parliament, you say, expressly negatived the second resolution; for they said that "they conceived the Resolution for unqualified, " unconditional repeal of the sixth of George I. to be a measure "of consummate wisdom."* The connexion between your premise and your inference, I confess, I am dull enough not to discern plainly.

" May it please your Majesty, we your, &c. in Parliament assembled, conceive the repeal of the sixth of George I. to be an extremely wise measure; and THEREFORE it is so plain, (and follows so inevitably from the premises,) that the connexion between the countries should *not* be placed, by mutual consent, on a permanent foundation, that we shall not trouble your Majesty, by stating so obvious a conclusion, or by more explicitly rejecting the second Resolution, which has been proposed for our consideration." Such logick might be parliamentary; but I doubt its being Aristotelian.

But I am digressing from my subject: for though you should have succeeded, as completely as you have failed, in supporting your position, that the Irish Parliament had rejected the second Resolution of the British Houses, yet this would not disprove Mr. Pitt's assertion, that further measures were in the contemplation of the Government of that day; nor would it diminish the weight of that evidence, which the English address and answer, and the second Resolution, abundantly supply in support of his assertion. It would at most prove only this, that the temper of Ireland, and the silence with which their Parliament passed this resolution over, made it necessary that Government, content to appease the jealousies of the Irish nation, and conciliate their affections by liberal concession, should arrest the grand imperial settlement in its career, and postpone its consummation to a more favourable moment.

And what a generous foundation did England lay! By the *first* resolution, she registered her consent that Ireland should be independent; and submitted the *second* to the new tribunal, which she had thus liberally erected. She first made us a high contracting power; and then solicited us to treat on equal terms. Consistently with the tenor of that *first* British resolution, which had renounced all pretensions to legislate for Ireland, the *second* admitted that the connexion between the countries could not be placed on a solid foundation, unless by *mutual consent*.

The Irish Parliament did not reject the second resolution; but, under the influence of some of the party which then prevailed, tacitly postponed entering, as the sister country had recommended, on measures that might be calculated to strengthen the

* Mr. Grattan's words.

the connexion. They withheld that consent, which the liberality of Britain had but just then rendered requisite or efficacious ; and preferred inhabiting the ruins of the fabrick which they had demolished, to building a firm imperial establishment in its room : whilst the sister country on her part, respecting the independence which she had conferred, acquiesced in the delay of that consummation which she desired. The regency, and commercial propositions followed : the contagion of French principles soon after got amongst us ; and separatists have been long demonstrating the truth of that opinion, pronounced by the British Legislature in 1782, (and of which it is your boast that our Parliament paid no attention,) " that the connexion between the countries ought, " by mutual consent, to be placed on some solid and permanent " foundation."

A few words more on this part of the subject, and I have done.

After mentioning that passage in the Irish Address, where it is said that " we conceive the resolution for the unqualified, unconditional repeal of the sixth of George I. to be a measure of consummate wisdom," you add that you " drew that address ; and introduced those words expressly to exclude any subsequent qualifications, or limitations, affecting to clog or restrain the operation of that repeal, and plenitude of the legislative authority of our Irish Parliament."

This paragraph in your speech I consider as very well deserving of attention.

The object, you tell us, of this Irish address was to negative the second of the British resolutions ; and with this especial view was that passage introduced, in which the wisdom of repealing the declaratory act is extolled.

What then, (on your statement,) was the qualification which you were desirous to exclude, and which you were apprehensive might clog the operation of the repeal ? *The placing the connexion between the countries, by mutual consent, on a solid and permanent foundation.*

This was the limitation which you were so anxious to exclude : this was the clog on the Irish independence, which you feared : this was the abridgment of Irish legislative authority, which you were so studious to avoid.

To place the connexion between the countries on a firm and permanent foundation—is, by your account, to restrain the efficacy of the repeal of the sixth of George I. and abridge the legislative authority of Ireland.

Sir, you may have advanced these doctrines rashly, or I may have mistaken the tendency of your positions : but if this be not the case,—if you have deliberately made the assertions which I attribute to you, and have acted the part which you describe, then

then to me you appear to have spoken the language, and (inadvertently I presume) further'd the cause of separation.

Those who regarded the Independence which we acquired in 1782, not as their end, but as their means,—who valued it not as a grant of freedom, but prepared to wield it as an instrument of separation,—will naturally oppose all measures which tend to strengthen the connexion; and must abhor Union, as utterly destructive of their hopes: to them, the act of annexation will seem a clog on the plenitude of Irish legislative authority; and while they declaim on the finality of the adjustment to which we have been alluding, they will in fact agree with the Minister, in considering it as preliminary and defective: the only difference between them will be this,—that while he may value it as a step towards Union,—they will esteem it as a stride towards separation.

I call not upon such men: I address not those, who represent the present connexion of the countries as a state of smothered hostility, and mutual intimidation: who derive the security of Ireland from her power of annoying Britain; and vaunt our cordiality, in forbearing to strike the blow, which however they would have continually to impend. I speak not to those, who mingle such bitter and repulsive doctrines, with their wheedling rants about standing or falling with Great Britain. I address myself to a very different description of persons: I call upon the well affected men of Ireland, the loyal opponents of the measure now proposed, to attend to the language of their new allies, and resist, if they can, *their* arguments for Union.

I now proceed to disprove the charge which you have brought against Mr. Pitt, of “denying a recorded act, and disclaiming “the final adjustment of 1782;”—and in order to preclude controversy as to facts, and to shorten discussion, I shall keep my promise of taking, as my premises, the statement which you have made.

Where are we to look for that disclaimer, which you have so directly ascribed to the British Minister? In the language which he has used, or in the conduct which he has pursued? If I examine his expressions, I am so far from discovering there, any denial of Irish Independence, that on the contrary I find it explicitly acknowledged, and even strongly asserted. I find the Minister declaring himself “to feel and know that the Parliament “of Ireland possess the power, *the entire competence*, to accept of, “or *reject*” the proposed Union: “that it is the undoubted “right of the Irish Legislature to reject, or to adopt such mea-“sures, as may appear to them injurious, or beneficial.”* By admitting the competence of the Irish Parliament to decline the offer which is made them, and the incompetence of a British Legislature to impose the measure on this country, does Mr. Pitt

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disclaim

* Mr. Pitt's Speech.

disclaim the final adjustment of 1782?—What more did we acquire by that settlement than independence? or how can independence be more unequivocally recognised? what more did we shake off, or did Britain surrender, than the competence of her Parliament to control, or bind this country? and how could language more perspicuously record this emancipation upon our part, or this surrender upon hers, than has been done by the expressions of Mr. Pitt? The case is so clear, that the plainest questions form my premisses, and the answers of every rational man will furnish my conclusions.

If it be not in his language that we can detect this denial of the settlement of 1782, which you have thought proper to charge on the British Minister, let us next enquire whether any of his proceedings amount to an infraction of that solemn compact.

“That settlement,” you say, “established two grand positions: first the admission of the Irish claim, to be legislated for by no other Parliament, but that of Ireland: secondly, the finality imposed upon the two nations, regarding all constitutional projects affecting each other.”

In undertaking to admit the *faits* on which your charge is grounded, as those facts are stated by yourself, I of course did not bind myself to acquiesce in all your inferences, and constructions. It therefore becomes necessary that I should mention, to what extent I agree with your account of the arrangement of 1782.

I consider it to have established only one position; viz. that all attempts of the British Parliament to legislate for this country should finally cease; and Ireland be thenceforth bound by no acts but those of her own Legislature.

Shew me that Mr. Pitt’s conduct has impugned this principle, and I shall admit the justice of your charge against him: Prove to me that Union will contravene it, and I shall withdraw my humble support from the measure.

Let us take a short view of the transaction of 1782: I accept of you, Sir, for my guide, in examining its parts.

It was a final adjustment: granted. But of what? Adjustment, settlement, arrangement are terms of relation, and imply something pre-existent: something which is to be adjusted, settled, or arranged. The tribunal which could decide, where no question was before them, must possess faculties which lie far beyond my comprehension.

What was in controversy between Great Britain and this country? The competence of a British Parliament to legislate for Ireland: a Parliament which contained no peer sitting in right of his Irish honours, nor any commoner representing the property or population of this country.

This was the matter in dispute ; and the adjustment consisted of a final surrender of the British claim. Upon this subject matter the settlement operated effectually ; but upon what was not in controversy it could have no operation at all.

What is your own account of the transaction ? Messages were sent from his Majesty to the Parliaments of the different countries, to come to a final adjustment, in order to remove the jealousies and discontents of the Irish. This country, in answer, declared the only cause of discontent, which it was not able by internal acts to remove, to be the interposition of the British Parliament, (constituted as I have described,) in the legislative regulation of Ireland. The question thus proposed, the decision followed : the British Parliament renounced its claim of interference : the stated grounds of Irish jealousy were removed ; and the final adjustment was thus concluded, and enrolled.

Great Britain, indeed, having silenced Irish discontent, was desirous to promote imperial connexion. She wished to render more comprehensive, and beneficial, the negotiation in which the countries had become engaged. She would fain have made the adjustment *more* conclusive : not indeed, by being more final upon the grievance stated, than it was already ; (since in this respect I admit the settlement to have been as conclusive as finality itself;) but by embracing another, and a wider subject, and setting at rest an important question which was likely to arise. Great Britain *first* wished liberally to emancipate this country ; and having done so, was desirous that independent Ireland should, on terms to be regulated by *mutual* consent, incorporate her freedom with that of her benefactor, and perpetuate at once the liberties, and integrity of the empire.—But in these views, it is your boast that she was frustrated, by the ungracious silence of an Irish Parliament.

To return then from this glance, at the permanent and comprehensive good which might have been accomplished, to the partial benefit which has been obtained, and to resume my enquiry, whether the present conduct of Britain be an attempt to repeal any concessions which she has made,—let me ask you whether it be now proposed that the British Parliament should legislate for this country ? It will not be answered that it is ; unless by a feeble sophism, which, before I have done, I may descend to notice.

Meantime let me put a case, which my own question has suggested to me, and which seems to furnish a fair argument *a fortiori*.

I will suppose that the British Parliament should propose to us, to resume the yoke we had shaken off in 1782. If they did, I should reject the measure, with as much indignation as would be compatible with my sense of the ludicrous nature of the proposal. But in refusing the degrading offer, I should admit that

while

while the Minister, who made it, acknowledged the full competence of the Irish Parliament to reject it, he could not be charged with violating the settlement of 1782; and I should despise the understanding, which refused to concur in this admission. The Minister, it is true, would offer for our acceptance the very same disgraceful system, which we had so recently and so radically reformed; and in doing so, would grossly insult our spirit and our sense: but still he would not meddle with our freedom: he would not infringe the adjustment of 1782. In a word, he would trust for the acceptance of his proposal, not to our dependance, but to our infatuation.

But does he make any such contemptuous proposal? no: Or will any one of those principles, or reasons, which demonstrated that control to be a grievance, which was exercised by a Parliament in which no Irish Members sat, apply to shew that it is incompatible with our freedom, to be governed by an Imperial legislature, in which we are adequately represented? He is a weak man, or an unfair man, who will not connect the principle asserted in 1782, (viz. that we should not be governed by any Parliament but our own,) with the abuse to which the assertion of that principle referred: who will not see that it was intended merely to protest against Ireland's being bound, where she was not represented.

But give to this assertion the widest possible extent of meaning. Uncandidly and delusively puff out the principle, beyond the meaning and intention of those by whom it was promulgated, and still I do not fear to meet you upon grounds, to which I might very reasonably object.

The Treaty of Union is the mutual work of the two countries: but the act of Union alone binding upon us will be a statute passed by the independent Irish Parliament, consisting merely of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland: composed merely of those, who, under the principle on which you rely, are exclusively competent to legislate for this country: and thus our remotest descendants will be governed in strict conformity to that very maxim, which you would set up as an obstacle to Union; inasmuch as the force and efficacy, with respect to Ireland, of all future acts of the Imperial legislature, will be derived from the statute of incorporation, passed exclusively by the King, Lords, and Commons of this country. So far as they affect us, the statutes of the Imperial legislature will be as completely deducible from an act of our own Parliament, as the title of his Majesty arises from the acts of settlement and recognition; or as, with respect to part of the British realm, it may be traced to an article of the Scottish Union.

Thus,

* Which latter is a sort of declaratory law.

Thus, (to sum up what I have said,) when you pronounce that the first article of the compact of 1782 excludes Union, because it covenants that the Irish people shall be governed by no legislature but that of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, your position admits of two satisfactory answers.

First, that the statute of Union is an act of legislation, exercised exclusively by that very Parliament, to which the final adjustment committed the power of legislating for this country; viz. by the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland; and that, as all future statutes, passed in the united Parliament, will be enacted by virtue of this fundamental law, their authority will therefore rest, as far as concerns this country, upon the very principle asserted in 1782; since the efficacy of those laws to bind the Irish people, will flow originally, and *merely*, although remotely, from an act of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland.

And secondly, it may be replied to your objection, that the Imperial Parliament will, with the full consent of Ireland, be the King, Lords, and Commons of this country. It will be so, compatibly with the principle of 1782; because Ireland will be adequately represented in that assembly: and even though the meaning of the principle had not been sufficiently explained, by that branch in its assertion which protests against the future interference of *British* Parliaments, yet no man who recollects the history of that period, and the nature of the abuse which we then sought to remove, can doubt that the principle established was *merely* this, that the Irish people should not be bound by laws, which the Irish Parliament did not concur in enacting.

I shall here close my examination of this topick; with an extract from your speech, and a few animadversions, for which it seems to call.

You tell us that “ finality was not only a part of the settlement of 1782, but one of its principal objects. *Finality was the principal object of Great Britain*; as legislative independency was the object of our country, Ireland wished to seize the moment of her strength, for the establishment of her liberties: *the court of England wished to conclude the operations of that strength, and bound its progress.* The one country wished to establish her liberty: the other to check the growth of demand. The court of England therefore came to an agreement with this country; viz. to establish for ever a free and independent existence of the Irish Parliament, and to preserve for ever the unity of the *British empire.*” the “ connexion” between the countries to be thenceforward “ founded on the eternal principle of unity of empire, and separation of Parliament.”

I shall not stop to enquire whether the separation of their Parliaments be a wise, (it certainly is not an obvious,) basis, on which

which to found the connexion of two countries ; but shall proceed at once to those more weighty considerations, which are suggested by the passage that I have cited from your speech. This extract I look upon to be pregnant with implications, highly deserving of attention ; and to illustrate strongly the profound remark of Lord Minto, that the independence, which we gained in 1782, was a transitory, not a permanent state of things ; which, if it were not followed by Union, would lead to separation.

Finality you pronounce to have been the grand object of Great Britain. She granted us the independence which we required : but, apprehensive that our claims might not terminate at this point, she "*wished to check the further growth of demand.*" Let me ask, what is the plain tendency of this insinuation ? Having acquired independence, what demand remained, the expectation of which might excite terror in Great Britain, unless it were the demand of total separation ? But, obvious as the inference from your statement may be, you do not impose upon us the trouble of collecting it : you put the matter more unequivocally, and directly, by saying that after England had granted us independence, she still deemed it necessary "*to bound the progress, and conclude the operations of our strength.*" The "*physical consequence*" of Ireland, according to this doctrine, had extorted independence from the sister country ; but in achieving this, our patriots had by no means gained their end : they had only made some progress to the point proposed : they were still in full, and formidable march,—when England, alarmed at the direction which they were taking, and the strong position which they had gained, thought it high time to check their career, "*and conclude the operations of their strength.*" "*The court of England therefore came to an agreement with this country :*" they came to a treaty, by which our patriots consented to stop their progress, and disband their forces, on being permitted to garrison a frontier post called *Independence*, which lay directly in their road, and which they looked on as the key to their promised land of separation.

Sir, this is not *my* account of the adjustment of 1782 ; and I ask your pardon if I have misinterpreted you, in supposing it yours : the extract on which I have commented is before our readers ; who have it in their power, from a more accurate analysis of its import, or an illustrative reference to your public conduct, to do you justice, and correct my misconstruction.

But, if any man took the view of Irish independence, which I may have been very erroneously attributing to you, I should use his picture, as a strong argument for Union. I should say to every loyal friend to British connexion, here is a person, who was party to the transaction of 1782, who may be presumed to know the

the end at which the energetick Irish aimed, and the efficacy of the means with which that arrangement had supplied them: he tells you, that our independence was but a step, and that “ the greater was behind,”—when Britain bid us halt,—and capitulated, by putting us in possession of the high roads to separation, on the terms of our undertaking not to use them! He shews you that independence was, in the eyes of some, less valuable, as it conferr'd freedom, than as it aggravated distinctnes: —as it wore away the bonds of connexion to a thread, which the first shock of sedition might snap for ever.

Shall the loyal man leave such an instrument in the separatists hands? shall we hear our enemy boast his power,—and yet hesitate to disarm him? shall we hear him detail all the advantages of the strong post which he has surprised,—and deliberate about dislodging him,—when we can do so by a word? when we can do so, without sacrificing an atom of Irish freedom;—which Britain does not call on us to lessen, but to blend? when we can do so, not by resuming our dependence, but merely by incorporating our distinctnes;—and mingling in an empire, of which all the parts will equally depend upon the whole? Far be it from me to disparage the adjustment of 1782: I only deprecate the perversion of a great political good. I never can look upon that settlement as pernicious, until that be demonstrated, which never can, that it has precluded a measure, for which on the contrary I think it has prepared the way. I hold those publick characters to be fortunate, beyond the usual lot of men, who having obtained Irish independence in 1782, have lived to perfect their work, by now bringing about an Union.

Unite, or separate: this is the alternative, with which the present day presents us: an alternative, which was discerned in 1785, by Mr. Foster: (but who has lost sight of the danger in proportion as it has advanced:) which rose more formidably upon the view in the year 1789; and which has lately shewn our peril with a distinctnes so alarming, that our safety depends on the promptitude of our choice.

But you do not agree with the British Minister in thinking that the proceedings of 1789 endangered the connexion. I might perhaps have hoped to find you convinced by the arguments of your friends the Speaker, and Mr. Fitzgerald; the former of whom is so far from joining in your eulogium, on the pious care which our Parliament took of the connexion at that period, that he considers their proceedings to have been of no avail; for that “ notwithstanding what passed, the Regent of “ Great Britain can alone represent the third estate of the Irish “ legislature;”* and who has, for the purpose of removing a difficulty which he declares does not exist, given his support to a bill

* See page 60 of the Speaker's Speech.

bill brought in by Mr. Fitzgerald, which alike opposes his (Mr. Foster's) sentiments, and yours: contradicting *his* opinions, by implying the necessity of an enacting statute to establish that, which he pronounces to have been law already; and opposing *yours*, by recording Mr. Fitzgerald's opinion, that it would be expedient to pass a bill which might prevent the recurrence of proceedings so hazardous to the connexion between the kingdoms, and so repugnant to the principles of the Irish constitution.

But I feel this part of the subject to be of too great moment, for me to let it pass undiscussed; or depute to one Anti-Unionist the task of replying to the other: not to mention that, independently of the importance of the topick, the mode in which you have treated it deserves notice, and animadversion.

It will scarcely be denied to be a maxim of our constitution, that both these countries should have the executive branch of the legislative the same: indeed this partial Union forms, at present, the only point of imperial contact: the single theoretick link, by which the islands are held together.

It is true you abridge the extent of this principle, by insinuation: you give to this constitutional axiom the nickname of the "*monarchical principle*;" and talk of the connexion as preserved "*through the medium of monarchy*." But I dissent altogether from your limitation;—which is a mere sophistical attempt to withdraw our attention from the end proposed, to the ordinary means stated as applicable for its attainment: I insist upon the maxim, in the full extent in which I have laid it down, and agree with your faithful allies, the Speaker and Mr. Fitzgerald, that the British executive, whether King or Regent, can alone represent the Irish third estate.

The mode of applying your sophism is sufficiently obvious: if you could once make us suppose monarchy the *only* medium of connexion, it would follow that any suspension of the exercise of monarchic power would effect a temporary separation of the countries; and absolve Ireland from the obligation of adhering to those maxims, which imply, as they secure, the continuance of connexion.

You might say that during the illness of our beloved and gracious King, the royal power being indefinitely suspended, the "*monarchical principle*" was, for a period of uncertain duration, become extinguished: that consequently the bond of connexion which this monarchical principle constituted was, for an indefinite length of time, unloosed; and that the kingdom of Ireland, though annexed to the royal, was no appendage of the *regential, executive* of England.

In exposing the pernicious tendency of the restriction with which you seek to qualify this axiom, and its direct repugnance to the end proposed; viz. permanency of connexion, I conceive myself

myself to have sufficiently proved your two anti-union colleagues right, and to have shewn that your limitation is altogether inadmissible. If it be imputed to me on the other hand, that in laying down the principle so widely, I make encroachments on the independence of my country,—I answer that the objection comes from those who confound distinctness with independence, and forget that British connexion makes any part of our political system: I answer that British connexion and Irish independence both form essential parts of our establishment. Each of these principles sets limits to the other; and the degree of independence which is incompatible with connexion, is also inconsistent with the spirit of our Constitution. It is because the line is hard to draw, and is much exposed to transgression, both inadvertent, and designed, that Union is become the wish of all prudent men, who would reconcile the liberties of their country with the integrity of their empire.

The principle being established, that the executive branch of the legislature should form the point, in which these national bodies politick cohere, and blend themselves into one imperial state,—it remained to regulate the manner in which this principle should operate. There were but two modes of proceeding to attain the end: either by ordaining that our executive should be that of England; or, *vice versa*, that the British should be *ipso facto* that of Ireland; and the latter has been made the maxim of our imperial constitution.

Thus the authority of the English executive in this country is a political inference; not an accidental accumulation, and falling in of powers. His Majesty, being King of Great Britain, is therefore King of Ireland. The latter proposition being a conclusion, deduced from that State Enthymeme, in which the suppressed premiss is the principle which I have laid down; viz. that the executive of Great Britain shall, in that right, possess the same executive authority in this country.

The connecting principle being thus established in its true extent,—being measured with the object which it was established to secure, and found to consist comprehensively in an union of the executive,—let us enquire whether it was violated, or adhered to, in 1789? whether we should accede to your position, that the proceedings of our Parliament were so well calculated to secure the connexion, that we cannot from thence deduce any argument for Union? or should rather admit the Speaker's doctrine, that what was then done was too glaringly unconstitutional to be available, and may consequently be passed over, without inference or notice? or lastly, whether we should acquiesce in the reasoning of Mr. Pitt, and say, that though the proceeding was unwarrantable, its separating tendency might nevertheless supply arguments for Union? The latter opinion is that which I have long embraced.

You acknowledge that "the act of annexation forms between the two countries their bond and connexion;" and add that the "Parliament" "preserved the identity of the executive" "po.," (which you thus impliedly admit to be the statutable bond,) by "choosing for their Regent, the heir apparent of the crown." *

On this assertion we are at issue: to me it seems that the spirit which may be collected from the statutes of 10th H. VII. 33d H. VIII. and 4th of William and Mary, was violated in two ways, by the proceedings of 1789. First, by nominating the heir apparent, before his Royal Highness had accepted the regency in England; and secondly, by investing him here with the full exercise of those prerogatives, which the British parliament had limited and abridged.

In appointing that illustrious personage Regent of Ireland, and investing him with immediate power of giving a royal assent to bills, at a time when he was not yet entrusted with the custody of the great seal of England,—we in fact repealed (and by a mere address,) the first-mentioned of those three statutes; † and in doing so, transgressed those limits which are prescribed to the constitutional principle of Irish independence, by the no less constitutional principle of British connexion.

In appointing his Royal Highness Regent here, while he was not yet invested with that high office in Great Britain, we revoked the act of Hen. VIII. which made this kingdom dependent on the crown of England, and which provided that the right of exercising executive power here, should arise from the rightful possession of that authority in Britain, and *ipso facto* accrue, by necessary inference, to its possessor: and this, repeal was a sacrifice of the principle of imperial connexion, to the wild spirit of Irish independence.

In this premature nomination of a Regent, we acted on a principle diametrically the reverse of that, which dictated the act of the 4th of William and Mary. That statute annulled all Irish legislative acts of James which had followed his abdication: and by its recognition § of the title of his successors, admitted that it did not require the sanction of an Irish act, but flowed to them from previous statutes, and imperial principles. If that statute tended to maintain the connexion, then the address of 1789 was calculated to dissolve it.

I do not mean to rely upon the possibility which there was, that the Prince of Wales would not be regent of Great Britain: a chance

* Mr. Grattan's words.

† And the Irish Statute of the 22d of the King, by which it is enacted that no bill shall pass into a law in Ireland, unless it be returned under the great seal of Great Britain.

§ See a note in the Preface of the last edition of Mr. William Johnson's pamphlet upon Union.

a chance too slight and trivial, to be taken into account. I stand on this position,—that by the connective principle of the Irish constitution, the being executive in Britain is the *sine quâ non*—and efficient cause of possessing a right to executive authority here: that therefore to nominate his Royal Highness *previously* to his appointment in England was unconstitutional; and to nominate him *subsequently* would be superfluous: the proper mode would have been to wait until he had become Regent of Great Britain,—and then to have passed an act of recognition.

But if I decline insisting on so remote, and merely physical a possibility, as the heir apparent's not becoming regent of Great Britain, I cannot on the other hand admit you to rely on the Irish Parliament's having fixed their choice upon his Royal Highness; or on their having done so, when that illustrious personage was already designated for the same high station, by the British Legislature. I insist on that deviation from the principles of our Constitution, and the law of our land, which consisted in our Parliament's claiming any right of choice at all; in their attempting to bestow, what they should at most have but acknowledged; and affecting to make that flow to the Prince from their election, which could only arise from his nomination in Great Britain. This being my reasoning, it is superfluous to observe that the circumstance which you alledge, can not in any degree affect it: and it is the less necessary for me to suggest, that if separatists had been desirous to avail themselves of the opportunity which his Majesty's indisposition offered, for politically estranging these islands from each other, they were likely to have proceeded as was done in 1789. They would have been cautious not to alarm the friends of British connexion. They would have made as palatable and seducing a choice as might be: under a nomination of the *same* regent appointed in Great Britain, they would have stolen in the precedent of a right to make a *different* election; and occupied the country in effusions of loyalty and freedom, while they were unobservedly laying the corner-stone of separation.

But if it was probable almost to certainty, that the Prince of Wales would be appointed regent of Great Britain, it was no less sure that he would not be invested with full regal power; but that a limited authority would be committed to his hands. And how, under those circumstances, did our Parliament proceed? Having usurped a right of election, which our Constitution did not give, they deemed it improper “to encumber the “regent with” those “extraordinary limitations,” with which his authority was to be abridged in England; and thought “it more “eligible to leave him in full exercise of all the executive pow-“ers.”* That is to say, they judged it expedient, in the teeth of

* Mr. Grattan's words.

of established principles, and explicit statutes, to destroy that unity of executive in the two countries, which consists as much in the sameness of the powers exercised, as in the identity of the person exercising those powers.

It matters not to my argument, whether the British Houses of Parliament were right, or wrong, in restraining the prerogatives of their regent: it is sufficient for my purpose that they did restrain them; and that they had authority so to do. This right you expressly acknowledged in 1789; though you appear to have forgotten your own doctrines, when you inveigh (in the speech before me,) against the Minister, for having called on the British Parliament to exercise those functions, which on that occasion you admitted them to possess.

In your speech of the 11th of February 1789, you state “the duty of supplying the deficiency in the full exercise of the “regal power,” (which resulted from the King’s indisposition) “to have devolved on the two Houses of Parliament, as the “surviving estates.”* I accede to this incontrovertible principle; and call on you, in return, to admit these inevitable deductions; viz. that the two estates are competent to regulate the powers which they confer; and that it is a sound and loyal exercise of this privilege, to bestow merely as much authority, as may be requisite to give due vigour to the Government,—and to form the powers which they reserve, into an entrenchment round the throne of their rightful Sovereign, during his temporary incapacity: so that whenever it shall be the will of Heaven to restore him, he may resume his royal functions, without difficulty or obstruction,—may find the constitutional balance undisturbed,—and the just prerogatives of his crown undiminished, and unimpaired. These maxims are as obvious, as they are sound. They do not compose the theory of a metaphysical resiner, but form a plain and practicable doctrine, which every honest member of parliament, who recollects the oath of allegiance that he had taken, would feel himself bound to act upon: and to those who troubled him with the jargon of “preserving the monarchical “principle,” he might reply, first that he *was* preserving it for his King; and secondly that they were shallow politicians, who could not see that the same portion of prerogative, which would be inadequate, as a permanent attribute of royalty, to protecting the third estate from encroachment, and maintaining through a course of ages the constitutional balance undisturbed,—might yet be fully sufficient for the temporary purposes, and provisional administration of a Regent.

That this destruction of the unity of executive power, which you extol as a *chef d’œuvre* of Irish policy and affection, went to contravene the principles of our imperial establishment, and manifestly

* Irish Parliamentary Debates.

manifestly to endanger the connexion,—appears to me to be a truth, too self-evident for argument. I shall therefore only add, that as we offered the Regent a greater power here—than he was to possess in England,—so we might have given him less: the mischiefs of such a reversal of the distinction are too apparent, to need being pointed out: yet this difference would have caused a less anomaly in our constitution, than that which the opposite proceeding was calculated to produce. For with the maxims upon our statute book staring us in the face, “ declaring that “ this kingdom justly and rightfully belongs to, and for ever de- “ pends upon, the imperial crown of England,” we gave the superior power to the subordinate executive; and preposterously made the greater depend upon the less.*

I close here, my view of a transaction, which you not only consider as a proper subject for eulogium, but as entitled to the last praise to which I should have supposed it could make pretension; viz. that of having conducted to preserving the connexion: a transaction, which Mr. Foster, on the contrary, deems to have been so indefensible, that he replies its nullity to those, who urge its mischiefs: a transaction, the separating tendencies of which, Mr. Fitzgerald has admitted,—and has recommended the application of a preventive,—which would assuage the symptom, without removing the disease: and lastly, a transaction, which Mr. Pitt, because he agrees with these latter gentlemen, therefore holds to be no contemptible argument for Union.

The events of 1785 you pass over in complete silence; nor can I blame you for avoiding a subject, which no discreet Anti-unionist would wish to introduce: a subject the more embarrassing at the present moment, because it cannot be discussed, without exposing that discordance, which so eminently distinguishes the heterogeneous opposition to which you belong;—rendering the connexion between its members as precarious, and infirm, as that of these islands would be, without an union.

It would be ungenerous to address to your friend and fellow-labourer in the chair, those invectives against the bill brought in by Mr. Orde, of which you were so liberal at the time of its introduction. Should you tell him now, as you told his predecessor then, “ that in a commercial point of view, the proposed “ arrangement was injurious to this country,—and that if looked “ at in a constitutional light, it put an end to the liberties of “ Ireland,” his situation would preclude him from replying, as he did then, that “ he could dwell for hours on the many bene-“ fits of that system: that it did not violate our liberties, or

“ involve

* I do not overlook, what I forbear repeating, that we also acted in direct violation of these fundamental laws, by affecting to elect an Irish Regent; when in fact his Irish prerogative must be derived to him from his being appointed executive of Great Britain.

" involve our constitution ; and that this country must be infatuated if she gave up the offer."*

In noticing those intestine dissensions, which render you a truly anti-union party, I must do you the justice of doubting, whether your conduct be not more consistent than that of the very respectable person, to whom I have taken the liberty of alluding. He at that time, (and I accede to his opinion,) did not deem the mere discretion of Parliament a security of sufficient force ; but thought that where there was so much at stake, a solemn compact was required—to preclude those dissensions, to which two independent legislatures were liable. He feared that collision, in cases of mere commerce, to which he would expose us on questions of Constitution. The connexion he would trust to the good fellowship of the two Parliaments ; assured (and the Regency has shewn with *how much* reason,) that even if a momentary intoxication should take place, they would not so justle, as to overturn the empire. But matters of trade being of more delicate, and high concern, he would secure by compact, and not confide to their good understanding, or good will. This undoubtedly must be the way in which he reasons, since otherwise those passages which have been cited from his speech by the British Minister, would amount to arguments for Union ; which he assures us they do not. Collating therefore his conduct in 1785, and 1789, I arrive at two very recondite truths, which seem, for their abstruseness, to be worth publishing to the world, —on the high and respectable authority of that gentleman : *first*, that distinct and co-ordinate Parliaments may differ alarmingly from each other on commercial Subjects ; but that on those imperial questions, in which their rival claims to power are more intimately involved, the most perfect harmony and concord may be expected : *secondly*, that to bind the legislature of this country to adopt the laws prescribed to them by the British Parliament,† " is not to violate our liberties in the smallest degree ;‡ but that to admit Ireland to a full participation in British freedom, and subject her to laws enacted by an assembly in which she is adequately represented, is to annihilate our dependence, and subvert our constitution !

You, Sir, (in my opinion,) are more consistent : To Mr. Orde's Bill, and to the proposed Union, you have made the same objection, (viz. that both measures are attacks on our independence;) and have, in both cases, given a pretext to your enemies for doubting whether the independence which you defend, be compatible with the connexion which we are determined to maintain.

I ask

* See the Parliamentary Debates for 1785.

† Which would have been the Effect of the Propositions.

‡ See the Speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the 12th of August 1785.

I ask pardon, Sir, for having adverted to a topick, of which you take no notice in your speech; and which you were so prudent in omitting, that I am only surprised at your venturing upon the Regency; where you also seem to me to be treading upon very hazardous and tender ground: I for my part, have been tempted to this digression, by two objects: first, the opportunity which it gives, of calling my reader's attention to that happy antithesis of opinion, that distinct,—and even conflicting independence of sentiment,—which insulates the individuals of your party; and renders an incorporate Union amongst them as hopeless, as it would be requisite, towards giving sufficient strength to resist the truth and justice of a cause,—to which they would, in all events, at length be forced to yield: And secondly, I was induced to enter on the discussion, by my wish to observe, that when you undertook to specify the British Minister's objections, (not to our constitution, which he would preserve, but to our distinctness, which he would incorporate,*) it would not have been uncandid to enumerate them all. You state them to consist of the cases of Regency, and War. I find the business of the commercial propositions, forming a third, not unimportant topick, in the reasoning of Mr. Pitt. I find him arguing for a Union, from the issue of that proposal, in a way which at least is clear, and in my mind is convincing. Tacitly assuming, what I presume you will not refuse to grant him; viz. that the connexion between the countries is to be preserved, and would be endanger'd by the collision of coordinate Parliaments,—he proceeds to observe that the danger of independent legislatures acting with jealousy towards each other, is an evil which can be remedied by two means only: either by some compact, entered into by the legislatures; or else by blending the two legislatures together. He defies the wit of man to point out a third expedient; (and the gage which he has thrown down, I confess I feel no disposition to take up;) and having stated that the measure of compact has been tried, and found practicable,—he infers that we must have a Union, if we would have an empire.

This I admit to be mere solid, unadorned reason: divested of every thing declamatory or epigrammatic; (which perhaps the Minister might think unsuitable to so grave a subject;) but I am not certain that the argument is the less deserving of an answer, for being plain, perspicuous, and convincing.

I shall not however dwell longer on what does not need to be enforced;—but shall attend you to those parts of the Minister's speech, which you consider to be worthy of animadversion.

“ The Minister proceeds: he states a second instance, namely “ that of war: here again the fact is against him: the Parlia-

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* “ The Minister proceeds: he specifies his objections to this settlement of 1782: the case of Regency is one; and War another.” Mr. Grattan's words.

“ment of Ireland have, since their emancipation, concurred with England on the subject of war; and their concurrence has been productive:” “The wild offerings of” their “liberty” have been beneficial.” It is not the Isle of Ceylon, “the Cape of Good Hope, the Mysore Country, nor the Dominions of Tippoo,” (in short it is not the security or aggrandizement of that empire of which she calls herself a part,) “that engages the attention, or interests of Ireland: it is her own internal freedom and constitution: it is *her own idea of that internal freedom and constitution; such as she herself expressed, in her convention at Dungannon: it is for the preservation of this (Dungannon) constitution, that she is interested in British wars.* On these principles I suppose the dissent of Ireland on the subject of war highly *improbable*: but *happy had it been for Great Britain, happy had it been for his Majesty, had the Parliament of Ireland not curst him with her concurrence in the American war.* I should therefore suggest that she is in less danger from the hesitation of Ireland, than from the precipitation of Great Britain. In his argument the Minister is weak; but in his remedy he is not only weak, but mischievous. He proposes, by taking away our power of dissent, *to withdraw our motives of concurrence.* I will put this question to my country: will you fight for the Lords and Commons who in the last century took away your trade, and, in the present, your constitution,—as for that King, Lords, and Commons, who restored both?—The Minister has destroyed this constitution: whose restoration had cost Ireland her noblest efforts; and was the habitation of her loyalty: I say of her loyalty, as well as of her liberty. We are accustomed to behold the Kings of these countries in the keeping of Parliament:” the temple of” Ireland’s “fame, as well as freedom; where she had seated herself, as she vainly thought, in modest security, and in a long repose.”*

It must be confessed to be no uninstructive example of the mutability of human opinion, to find you pronouncing an eulogium on that Parliament, which you so lately abandoned, with such decided reprobation: to find you consecrating, as an holy sanctuary of liberty and fame, that place from which, suffocated with the stench of its servility and corruption, you had rushed forth with an indignant promise, that, until its pollutions were removed, you never would return.† Into that temple,—uncleansed, unpurified,

* Mr. Grattan’s words.

† Thus I must interpret the first paragraph of your address; for to insist upon a distinction between not accepting a seat from the patron of a close borough, and not soliciting a seat from the electors of a great city, would be a subtlety and special pleading far beneath you. It would be so, though we should look no farther than the paragraph itself, and not corroborate the construction which I have given it, by an examination of the general import of your address.

unpurified, you re-enter,—and prostrate yourself with adoration before the image which you had scorned. You resume your seat in that assembly, unaltered, unreformed, from which you not only retreated, but retreated at a time, when nothing short of profligacy the most flagrant and atrocious, should have driven you forth: at a time when Rebellion might be said to have already unsheathed the sword; and the same Parliament on which you trampled, with such contumelious abhorrence, was attacked by enemies from without, and traitors from within. “Without “reform,” you then declared, “there could be no self-legisla-“tion.”* There has been no reform; and you now oppose Union, because it invades our privilege of self-legislation.† You who inveighed against “the fabrication of boroughs, as the fa-“brication of a court parliament, and the exclusion of a con-“stitutional commons;—as an act more radically subversive of “the fundamental rights of the realm, than the ship-money, or “tyranny of the court of high commission, or star-chamber: as “a subversion not merely of the fundamental laws, but of the “constitutional lawgiver,”§—now offer your repentant homage to that court parliament; and aspire to record your dying testi-“mony against a measure, which would demolish nearly three-“fourths of the borongh fabrick, whilst it left the county repre-“sentation undiminished. To that same distinguished and very loyal person, who fills the chair of our House of Commons, (or, as you used to call it, our borough parliament,) who has so often heard with terror your projects of reform, you now address (and you are listened to!) your reprobation of a measure, which would set these dangerous and wild projects at rest for ever.

In the name of consistency, and of common sense, which are we to attend to? your former invective, or your present panegyric? did you slander then—or do you flatter now? whether do we live under a restored constitution, regained by the efforts of a revered King, Lords, and Commons? or have our rights and liberties been in the dust since the reign of James I.? and is our House of Commons a mere court gang, which has dissolved the legal parliament, and thrust “the constitutional lawgiver” out of doors? are you really become interested about the fate “of parliaments and princes?” or do you continue indifferent as to how “it may please Heaven to dispose of them,” and remain anxious only for “the liberties of the people?”‡ those liberties which our constitution has entrusted to the guardianship of the three estates; but which your speech seems to commit to the convention at Dungannon.

You put this question to your country, will they “fight with “zeal for the Lords and Commons who deprived them of their

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“trade;

* Mr. Grattan's Address.

§ Mr. Grattan's Address.

† Mr. Grattan's Speech.

‡ Conclusion of Mr. Grattan's Speech.

“ trade; and took away their constitution?” the quere appears to me to be of the same complexion with that doctrine, which refers the security of one part of the empire to its means of injuring the remaining portion: which relies on Ireland’s “ powers of retaliation;” and enumerates amongst the safeguards of our imperial constitution, our being able to “ affect the navy of England, by regulations regarding our provisions; † and to affect her empire, by commercial treaties with the rest of the world.” Such doctrines represent these islands as for ever engaged in occupying state-positions, and guarding their respective frontiers against mutual inroad; and form a system, which places our imperial connexion on the broad and solid basis of eternal jealousy, estrangement, and distrust. Such doctrines would supply an answer,—if the reports of our secret committees, the severe code upon our statute book, and the devastation of our country had not already furnished one more irrefragable and convincing,—to those fair promises which were made in 1782; on which, in concurrence with the Speaker, you rely: they would prove to us that the great national arrangement which then took place had *not* “ secured the tranquillity of Ireland; or united the affections as well as interests of both kingdoms;”‡ they would shew us that the Viceroy was mistaken, in supposing that by that settlement “ the two kingdoms were made one; indissolubly connected in unity of interests, and unity of constitution;”§ and would demonstrate that the seeds of separation were too deeply sown, to be eradicated by any measure less consolidating than Union.

But in all that declamation which I have last extracted from your speech, where lurks your refutation of what the British Minister has objected to the present order of things, considered with a view to the safety of British connexion?

Mr. Pitt’s argument on this part of the subject, as I understand it, is as follows: Theoretically speaking, two independent legislatures expose the empire, which they distract, to dissolution: in the case of Great Britain and Ireland, experience has most alarmingly reduced this theory to practice. “ In the only instance,” (that of the Regency) which has occurred, in which “ the countries could feel the effects of jarring legislatures, they did feel it;”* they felt it shake the imperial connexion to its foundations. Therefore, in abolishing the present system, we are

† I have heard it conjectured that the maiming of cattle which prevailed about a year ago, in the West of Ireland, was a mere reducing of this constitutional principle to practice.

‡ Address of the Irish Commons in 1782.

§ Speech of the Lord Lieutenant in 1782.

* Mr. Pitt’s Speech.

are not complying with the airy notions of metaphysical speculators; but are ceasing to act upon a theory, which we find to be ruinous in practice. What occurred in one case, may happen in another; and it would not be prudent to risk a second political convulsion, where the one from which we are escaped had proved nearly fatal.

Whether the right of choosing a Regent, which the Irish Parliament practically claimed in 1789, was one which really flowed to them from their independence, (qualified as that independence is by the act of annexation,) might be doubted; and by me the existence of such a right is denied: and therefore, however strong the argument may be, which that transaction furnishes against the system that produced it, yet it is not so cogent a reason, as may be drawn from a case where the right of the Irish Legislature will not admit of controversy; yet where the exercise of that right must threaten the connexion. Such is the case of questions regarding peace or war. "Will any man contend," says Mr. Pitt, "that the independent Legislature of Ireland has not a right to discuss the question of peace and war? Will any man tell me that it is not possible for the two Parliaments to entertain different opinions on these important points?" or, "taking it as the basis of the argument, that the connexion between the two countries is necessary for their mutual security,—is it safe, or prudent, to leave it exposed to all those accidents,"* which may arise from the exercise or the abuse of independence?

Such is the argument which you call weak; but which you have left unanswered: an argument, involving this evident and material truth,—that since it is more presumable that our Parliament should at some time, *exercise an undoubted right*, (such as that of discussing the question of peace and war,) than that they should *usurp a privilege*, which their independence did not in fact confer, (such as that of choosing an executive,) therefore the present ill cemented imperial establishment is even more objectionable and insecure, from its giving birth to such a right,—than from its having led to such an usurpation.

But how strongly do your arguments go to shew the *diffusion* likely, which the Minister has represented as merely possible!

You admit his position that the right exists: (indeed its existence cannot be denied;) but you rely on the improbability of its being exerted.

I might with great truth observe that an object of such moment, as the security of the connexion, should not be trusted to probabilities, where certainty can be had: but I chuse rather to meet you on the ground which you have chosen, and to insist that your own reasoning refutes your own assertion. "Happy,"

you

* Mr. Pitt's Speech.

you tell us, “ had it been for Great Britain, if the Irish Parliament had not concurred in the American war.”—Here we seem to have descended from the refinements of abstract theory, to all the gross and palpable realities of practice; and to have got upon, not a mere speculative right, but one, of which you recommend the occasional exercise, as highly beneficial to the empire. Is it to be doubted that some future members of the Irish Parliament, of sufficient political influence to carry their point, might from factious motives, or mistaken views, act upon your principle, and prevail on the legislature of this country to dissent from that of Britain, on this imperial subject? yet that the exercise of this right must more than hazard the connexion, seems to me to be a position, too clear for argument. Thus the question appears to be whether, if we wish the islands to remain connected, it be expedient to correct a system, which gives birth to rights that are likely to be exercised,—and which cannot be exerted with safety to the connexion? whether the British Minister was not warranted in charging us with having “ abolished one constitution,—and forgot to form another?” that is to say, with having destroyed one mode of securing the connexion, and not substituted any other in its place? whether, in a word, the following position be not as true, as it is extensive,—that there is no effectual method of connecting *distinct* nations, unless by making one depend upon the other: and therefore that two countries, which would be connected, and yet free,—can no otherwise obtain both wishes, than by Union?

“ It is not the isle of Ceylon, or the Cape of Good Hope,” it is not the success of British arms, nor the glory or prosperity of the British empire,—“ that engage the attention, or interests of Ireland; it is for the preservation of her own idea of her internal freedom and constitution, such as *she expressed in her convention at Dungannon*, that she is interested in British wars.”*

Is this the specimen you give, of Irish cordiality to Britain? is it from such positions you infer that the empire is already too well cemented, by the zeal of Irish loyalty and affection, to need any political arrangements, towards consolidating it more? Is it thus you demonstrate the improbability on which you rely, of Ireland’s dissenting on the subject of war from Britain? yes, Sir, I can very well conceive that those, who are only solicitous to reduce to practice, the principles of a Dungannon constitution,—who, stoically indifferent to the fate of Parliaments and Princes, are only anxious for what they are pleased to call the liberties of the people,—who regard the legislature as the creature, and the populace as the creator, and would sacrifice Government and good order, to the monstrous idol which they have set up,—I can well suppose that such may be “ interested in British wars:” I should only

* Mr. Grattan’s words.

only doubt whether the interest which they felt was on the side of Britain: I should only doubt whether they would zealously co-operate with England, in putting down the very principles which they adored. In a word, (and to conclude my examination of this topick,) you seem to me not only to have failed to refute,—but to have strongly corroborated the reasoning of Mr. Pitt; who only insisted on the *possibility* of an event,—which all who admit your doctrines must consider as even *probable*, in a high degree.

You accuse the Minister of “concurring with the men whom “he executed, in thinking the Irish Parliament a grievance; and “differing in the remedy only: they proposing to substitute a “Republic; and he the yoke of the British Parliament.”*

I shall not stop to condole with you on the fate of those unfortunate reformers, (the same whom a morning paper has,—no doubt, erroneously,—represented you to have described as shedding their blood for their country, on a scaffold;) but shall proceed at once to assure you that Mr. Pitt does not think the Irish Parliament a grievance; and therefore proposes that, after Union, the Irish Parliament shall remain: he only considers its distinctness as a mischief; which therefore he wishes to have remedied, by incorporation.

Neither does he intend “to substitute the yoke of the British Parliament,” in the room of, what it is not long since you pronounced to be, the slavish yoke of the “Borough Parliament” of Ireland: his project merely is to defeat the machinations of separatists and traitors, by wresting a political weapon from their hands, and imposing the (to them) intolerable yoke of three well cemented imperial estates: His design appears to be, that from henceforth the representatives of Ireland shall contribute to enact laws which shall be binding upon Yorkshire;—and the Yorkshire Members to enact laws which shall be binding upon Ireland.

But see whether Union, instead of imposing, may not rather remove the yoke of the British Parliament. See whether connexion, and distinct independence, be not situations so incompatible with each other, that the settlement of 1782, unable to reconcile them, wisely sacrificed the latter in a great degree.

That Ireland is dependent on the British Crown—will be admitted: it remains to enquire whether it is not consequently dependant on the British Parliament.

The Royal person is undoubtedly sacred: personally, the King cannot be called to account. But his government is subject to Parliamentary investigation,—by virtue of that principle, which renders Ministers responsible for their measures.—Observe the consequence.

Carefully

* Mr. Grattan's words.

Carefully to preserve Ireland to the empire, is the obvious duty of the British cabinet: a duty, for the neglect, or breach of which, the Ministers will be heavily responsible to the English Parliament. But our three estates cannot enact a valid law, without the act * and concurrence of a British Minister,—the servant of a British Parliament; and that Minister, of course, will not validate any measure, which may draw upon him the displeasure of the Legislature, to which he is amenable for his conduct. Thus, can we have any law, against the will of the British cabinet? or is the pleasure of an English administration likely to differ from that of an English Parliament? British Ministers stand, themselves, beyond the sphere of our control; and should we even visit their defaults upon our own, such injustice would be as ineffectual, as it was cruel.

Thus Ireland, by the settlement of 1782, acquired merely the right of exclusively originating her own laws †:—but still, by virtue of the connecting principle of our constitution, (and without supposing any abuse, or encroachment on the part of England,) we remained subject, through the Minister, to the control of the British Parliament;—if subjection to the deputy be subjection to his principal: and every statute, which we have passed since that period, may be considered as a sort of charter, under the great seal of England, granted to this country by the King of Great Britain, with the tacit consent of the two other British estates, and at the petition of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland.

That dependence of this kingdom on the British Crown, which is declared by the act of annexation, is either merely nominal, or it is real: if it be but nominal, then so is our connexion: and the two countries are at this moment in a state of separation; not held together by any principle whatsoever. If it be real, it involves a dependence on the British Parliament: a dependence, which is not the less substantial, for being indirect; and which puts us in a situation incomparably less free, than that in which we should be placed by Union; inasmuch as it lays us at the feet of a Parliament, which the constituent body of Ireland does not contribute to return. ‡

Of

* Affixing the great seal.

† A right most explicitly, and practically recognised by the British Minister's admission that the countries cannot be united but by mutual consent, and by virtue of two laws, one originating from the Irish, and the other from the British legislature.

‡ It is true that it would be an *abuse* of this control, if the British Parliament should obstruct our right of self-legislation, or censure the Minister for having put the great seal to any act, which did not threaten the connexion. But in the moment that Anti-Unionists reply to my reasoning, by insisting on the liberality and equity of England, and the improbability of her

Of the soundness of this last mentioned principle, the Irish nation was fully sensible in 1782; and they recognised its truth in that very assertion, which I have heard perverted into an argument against uniting the countries. When our House of Commons represented to his Majesty in that year, that “the kingdom of Ireland was a distinct kingdom, with a Parliament of her own, the sole legislature thereof,”—they meant to allege their distinctness, as an argument against their being bound by the acts of a British legislature; and the reasoning palpably implies this position, that the case would be different, if the countries were united: since in that case, the Irish people could not justly complain of being bound by the acts of a legislature, in which Ireland was adequately represented.

But, “instead of a constitution, which established peace in Ireland, Mr. Pitt revives a principle which produced war in America.”* He speaks the same language with his sword in this country, which Lord North articulated, (with the same organ,) to the colonies; and the fabrick which he builds in the room of that which he has destroyed, excludes the people, and extinguishes the constitution.†

The constitution which you thus regret, is the same which we enjoyed, (or, as you then thought, which we suffered,) when you wrote your address to the citizens of Dublin. The Catholics still groan under the same yoke which oppressed them at that time; viz. toleration the most perfect, civil freedom the most complete, and no inconsiderable share of political power. The Legislature is still, as it was then, unreformed: more connected with the property, than with the turbulence of the country; and encumbered with the pompous impediment of a House of Lords, standing between us and the blessings of a Dungannon constitution.

The “peace” which that constitution has “established,” we have all witnessed. The convention and gunpowder acts,—the insurrection bill,—the acts of indemnity and attainder,—are all testimonies, upon record, of a tranquillity,—which however received some temporary interruption in 1798: a tranquillity of which you now appear to be more sensible, than you were when you acquainted your constituents with the last ineffectual “effort,” which your party had made “before the close of Parliament,

“for

her abusing any influence which she may possess, they save me the trouble of refuting those other inconsistent arguments of theirs, which represent the danger that is to result to this country after Union, from Great Britain’s abuse of that superiority which the relative number of her representatives is said to give.

* Mr. Grattan’s words.

† Substance of Mr. Grattan’s Speech.

" for the restoration of domestic peace;" * and insisted on the existence of a morbid and irritating cause, " which, till Parliament should be reformed, must agitate this country for ever." †

But Mr. Pitt, " revives a principle, which produced war in America:" When has Government adopted *any* measure, which did not recal the colonies to your mind? If I look into the parliamentary debates, in every chart of your political discoveries, I find America to occupy the greatest space. In your address, I find you ringing her story in our ears. To the continuance of the system, to which Union would put an end, you then opposed the warning example of America. ‡ To resist the Union which is resorted to for the correction of that former system, America is the ground on which you chuse to stand. It is the Othello's handkerchief, with which you reply to arguments, and facts,—and record your incurable jealousies of England.

From a loyal member of Parliament, I am surprised to hear this monotonous and incessant din: to the mouth of a separatist such language would be very suitable. The syllogism would run thus:—The conduct of Great Britain justified America in separating herself by force: But England is pursuing the same conduct towards this country; therefore Ireland would do well to separate from Great Britain.

But the fabrick which, with that *vox ferrea*, the British sword, Mr. Pitt now calls on these two countries to build, " excludes the people; and extinguishes the Constitution." §

These positions are neither obvious, nor unimportant enough, to warrant you in assuming them, without entering upon any proof; and I for my part must take the liberty of disputing both.

How does the Minister's scheme exclude the people? not by increasing the relative quantity of county representation; and diminishing the number of those borough members, who, you have told us, do not *form*, but *exclude* the legitimate commons; subverting the constitutional lawgiver, and *working the people completely out of the lower house of Parliament.* ¶ Not by increasing the value and influence of the elective franchise, in the hands of the great Catholic body of the people; who, it will not be denied, must have an incomparably greater share in contributing to return the county, than the borough representation.

How then is the consequence to be produced, which your foreboding mind deplores? By the effect which the measure will have on Catholic claims.

Let

* Mr. Grattan's Address.

† Ibid.

‡ " We saw the ministry pursue that very plan towards Ireland, which they regretted they had not resorted to in the case of America; viz. acceding to the American claim, and then re-establishing British dominion, by influencing the American Assembly."—Mr. Grattan's Address.

§ Mr. Grattan's assertion.

¶ Mr. Grattan's Address.

Let us observe what will be its operation upon these. So far from depriving them of one atom of their present privileges, it will secure to them their perpetual enjoyment; leaving them consequently and irrevocably possessed of the inference which some of their advocates deduce; viz. that their having acquired so much is a reason for granting more: while, at the same time, neither the principle, nor any of the articles of Union will directly bar their claims; or pronounce expressly, or by the remotest implication, that the Catholic body shall obtain nothing more.

Therefore, we can only estimate the effect of the measure on their prospects, by comparing the favourable chances which their present circumstances produce, with those which must result from the situation in which they would be placed by Union.

To what principle do the adversaries of Catholic pretension refer their opposition? they insist on the danger to which the established church would be exposed, by putting power into the hands of a sect, which greatly exceeds our Protestant inhabitants in number. This is an obstacle, which I have your authority for asserting that Union would remove: You state Catholics to be to Protestants, at present, in the ratio of three to one; and that after Union they will be as one to four; and this statement involves an admission, that the measure would improve their hopes, by removing an argument which is now urged against their claims.

They have submitted their pretensions to the legislature of this country; and their application has not been attended with success. The removal of every incapacity attached to their religion, was one of the principal measures which you wished to carry; and your address informs them that you quitted Parliament, in despair of succeeding.

Have the Catholics any good ground for expecting—that the sentiments of the Irish legislature will become more favourable to their claims? The Corporation of Dublin is not less adverse to them, than to an Union. The City Representatives, the Speaker, and several other loyal members of the present opposition (of whom I should not do justice to my own sentiments, if I spoke otherwise than with respect,) have not I believe expressed any strong opinions in favour of Catholic pretensions; nor given that body reason to suppose that, if the present measure were lost by the resistance of Protestant ascendants,—the same powerful influence which rejected Union, would bestow political privilege upon them.

Therefore, as Union would refer their claims, not to that legislature by which they have already been rejected,—not to a “borough Parliament,” before which you despaired of ever succeeding,—but to an unprejudiced tribunal, which has delivered

no opinion, and would hear the claimants under circumstances more favourable to their petition,—it seems to follow that the measure must improve their views: and the liberal concessions which have been already made to that body,—the foundation of the seminary at Maynooth,—the supposed project of connecting with an Union, some proper support for the Roman Catholic clergy, and some system of regulation for their church,—all tend to shew that Government is not bigotted against that religion; but that those who profess it, will have the full advantage of all arguments which may result from Union, in favour of their demands.

Neither Protestants nor Catholics should forget what happened in the reign of Anne. They should recollect that the enactment of that penal code, which has been repealed by the liberality of modern times, took place after an ineffectual attempt, on the part of Ireland, to obtain that Union,—which is now resisted with so much violence, and so little reason. This fact records the opinion of the legislature in those days, that the incompatibility of Catholic power with Protestant security—was an effect, produced by our distinctness, and which consequently Union would remove.

But let us dismiss the numerous arguments, which offer themselves to prove that this measure is favourable to the prospects of the Roman Catholic; (and favourable, without furnishing ground of jealousy to the Protestant; since the only way in which Union can promote Catholic views, is by rendering the established Church impregnably secure:) I say let us wave those arguments; and merely assume what cannot be denied, that the measure will not diminish their present grounds of expectation. The natural inference seems to be, that they should examine the other consequences which Union will produce. That they should look beyond the mere subordinate concerns of their sect; and recollect that by being Catholics they have not ceased to be Irishmen,—deeply interested, as such, in the prosperity of this Country. Those advantages, which will result from the restoration of order and tranquillity—the security of property—and introduction of British capital, industry, and adventure,—while they accrue to all the inhabitants of Ireland, must be especially beneficial to the Catholic body; inasmuch as these form the great mass of our people. Thus their real weight and consequence would be augmented, even though their political privileges should remain the same; while the measure which thus added to their prosperity, would do so without at all lessening their hopes.

But how does Union operate to exclude the Catholics? by making them one to four; instead of being three to one.* Their admission to Parliament you seem to speak of as a likely event;

* Mr. Grattan's Speech.

event ; (though your object is to stimulate their prejudices against a *Unión*,) but why (say you) will they become admissible ? because they cease to be any thing : because their relative proportion being destroyed, their physical consequence is extinguished for ever. Under such circumstances, their admission will be of little avail.†

I hope these maxims are not illustrative of your principles : I am sure they are deserving of serious attention. They seem to mark it as your opinion, that unless Catholics be left formidable, they should not deign to be free ; for that they cease to be any thing, when they cease to be dangerous to the established church. The Catholic individual, who acts upon your doctrines,—must not consider himself as an unit,‡ nor yet as an Irishman. He must neither be content, upon a comparison of his condition with that of any single Protestant, to find the amount of his constitutional privilege to be the same ; nor yet must the corps to which he links his interests, and holds himself inseparably to belong, be the general population of the empire in which he lives. No ! this would be to admit the detestable principle of *Union* ; and violate the distinct independence of his church, by identifying its interests with those of the established religion. All is lost, unless the two varieties of christianity be preserved in a state of reciprocal estrangement, and, as it were, electrical repulsion. Every Catholic of your school must, on principle, be a Sectarian. *Ita se quisque extollit, ut deprimat alium* : he insists on being equal in political rights to the Protestant ; and that his sect shall be far more numerous than the members of the established church. Before he will pronounce that he is satisfied with his condition, he examines the muster-roll of that Catholic body, which his system represents as drawn out in hostile array against their Protestant fellow subjects ; and if the ratio be three to one, he is content. But to alter or impair this relative proportion—would be to extinguish for ever the physical consequence of his sect ; and prevent it from so practising the prudent system of “ annoyance,” as to keep the established Religion properly *in check*.

I call upon the loyal Catholics, (a very respectable, and I believe numerous description,) to disclaim arguments which—by implying that the freedom is not worth accepting, which is rendered consistent with the safety of the established church,—must excite every friend to order and good government against their claims : doctrines which teem with confusion and alarm ; recommending to yield, not to the justice of the claim, but merely to the violence and number of the claimants ; and *concede* to that *vis consili expers*, which threatens an abuse of the powers that it extorts :—doctrines, which may be thought to extend privilege to the Catholics; not from liberal motives, or veneration for the different

† Mr. Grattan's Speech.

‡ Ibid.

different branches of the Christian faith; still less as an encouragement, or reward to loyal conduct; but because power in the hands of a turbulent and unenlightened multitude, might be converted to an instrument, for propagating those principles, which (to the ruin of Catholic, as well as Protestant freedom, property, and security,) would form a constitution of Dungannon fabrick:—doctrines, in a word, which place the dignity of the Catholic on the same respectable footing with that of those Northern tribes, (possessed of all the physical consequences which numbers give,) who overturned the Roman empire, extinguished the liberal arts, and for ages involved Europe in the gloom of ferocious barbarism.

But “Union is not only an exclusion of the people: it is also “ an extinction of the constitution.””*

This last is a very material and relevant position; and if well founded, should decide every Irishman against the measure which you use it to oppose. But where are your proofs? You have not adduced one. Is it becoming to enter the lists, on such an occasion as the present, armed for the combat with nothing better than a dogma? a weak, subversive, and refuted assertion? You cannot deny that this measure meets with countenance from much of the property, the intelligence, and virtue of the country; and you flippantly allege that the plan which they thus zealously support, so manifestly extinguishes the constitution,—that you will not waste time in proving so plain a truth!—This you state, *en passant*, as the effect of a measure which I, on the contrary, in my conscience believe to be that, which since Ireland was a country, has received the most honourable and disinterested support: and been encountered with the most corrupt and selfish opposition.† You told your Constituents in 1797, that they had no Constitution:—that for an honest man to sit as a representative in Parliament, was to banter the abused people with an empty, ineffectual, and delusive form:—and now, when you assert the value and dignity of the Irish Commons, and protest against the surrender of a constitution, which you so lately declared we had not to surrender,—you seem to think that this inconsistency requires no explanation. After the termination of a long and formidably-threatened insurrection, which spoke in a voice of thunder the precariousness of our situation, when the royal wisdom calls on Parliament to profit by experience; and prevent a repetition of the dangers which they have escaped,—so far from deciding, you will not even deliberate; but, under the shelter of a constitutional etiquette, § (suited to circumstances

* Mr. Grattan's words.

† It is almost unnecessary to observe that I qualify this assertion with those exceptions, which a respect for Parliament, and a regard for the rules of decorum, and of truth enjoin. I am *sincere and serious*, both in laying down the position, and admitting the exceptions.

§ which considers the speech from the throne as the speech of the Minister.

stances less emergent and extraordinary than the present,) you tell his Majesty that he has broken the compact between King and people, and proposed to us an absolute surrender of our constitution. A nobleman, whose important services to his Sovereign have shed, even on the ungrateful separatist, a portion of that lustre which they procured for the empire, avows himself ambitious to close his honourable career by giving prosperity to Ireland, and security to that empire: but you tell him, that to do this would be to subvert our constitution. The House of Lords (I believe unanimously,*) proclaim their concurrence with the Royal views, and you (constructively voting them an useless estate) pronounce the scheme—of which they have expressed their approbation—to be a plain surrender of the constitution.

“ Nineteen of the principal counties of Ireland—all the great commercial towns, Dublin excepted,—five-sevenths of the country in local extent,—and much more than that proportion in property,—have called for the discussion of the measure,—and the majority of them have expressed their conviction that it is a beneficial one;”‡ but this opinion you encounter with an unsupported, unargued assertion; and tell them without periphrasis, or ceremony, that they are all traitorous subverters of the Irish constitution. I shall not say whether such language tends to excite indignation; but I am sure it is not calculated to produce conviction. Nay, mortified at perceiving the change of publick opinion,—enraged to find those prejudices subsiding, which alone concealed the weakness and deformity of their cause,—your party attempt to brand, with the title of apostates, all those who have listened to reason, or reflection: who have magnanimously retracted an hasty opinion, and preferred encountering the obloquy of a faction, to working the injury of their country.

Repugnance to Union was a sentiment which, when the measure was first stirred, it was excusable if not laudable to entertain: a transient sentiment, dictated by that national spirit, which even in its excesses, inspires us with respect. But it is the boast of an upright man to renounce an error; and the privilege of a rational creature to discover truth. When I read the able publications to which this question has given birth,—when I observed the temperate and conciliating conduct of the sister country,—and above all when I considered the utility of the measure itself,—too manifest to be long unnoticed, or unacknowledged,—I trusted that the publick sentiment would change,—and never shall concur in disparaging those persons, whose only fault is their having fulfilled my hopes, by yielding to conviction: nor shall I on the other hand dissemble my contempt for those, whose objections to Union are still unremoved, because not having arisen

from

* Certainly by an immense majority.

† Speech of Lord Castlereagh, on Wednesday Jan. 15, 1800.

from the transient feeling of a generous mind, they must endure as long as the corrupt and selfish motives from whence they spring. You have quoted Tacitus—in answer to some doctrines of Mr. Pitt: he is a writer of great and merited authority, particularly estimable for his just reflections; and has somewhere sketched the character of that obstinacy, of which the anti-union inflexibles are so vain. *Ea est in re prava pervicacia: ipsi fidem vocant.*

But, to return to the subject from which I have digressed,—your assertion, that Union subverts the Constitution, is not only altogether unsupported, but fraught with implications the most dangerous and subversive. The articles yet unsettled, and unknown, you encounter the mere principle in its most abstract form: and pronounce that, under whatever circumstances, and upon whatever terms, to incorporate with England, would be to surrender our Constitution: at least that it would be so, unless Ireland were, (in violation of every principle of policy or justice) allowed to send as many representatives to the Imperial Parliament, as were returned by England; notwithstanding the superior wealth, extent, and population of this latter.

Now I defy you or any man to support this extensive proposition, without at the same time establishing a principle, which will, if admitted, invalidate the Union that early in the present century incorporated Scotland with England.

Yet if that Union was invalid, (which undoubtedly it was, if your principle be a sound one,) his Majesty possesses no dominions north of Berwick; and the acts which have passed at Westminster for the last ninety years are the mere usurpations of an illegal assembly. Thus the operation of the principle on which alone you can support the assertion that you have made, is at once to cancel one of the title deeds by which the King holds his crown; and to turn the statutes of the British Parliament for near a century to waste paper. Yet amongst them we meet those proceedings with respect to Ireland, which constitute the solemn compact of 1782, whose finality has been so perversely made an argument against Union.

Or if you grant that the lapse of ninety years may, by this time, have given a lame title to his Majesty, and infused a portion of efficacy into the laws passed in the United Parliament; and that the acquiescence of Scotland may at length have cemented into something of solid and regular establishment, that originally unconstitutional and incoherent mass, which, with the aid of some Scotch statesmen, of no better reputation for knowledge or integrity than himself, the ignorant Lord Somers had put together, (Lord Somers who had already exposed his arbitrary principles, in a work of his, commonly called the Bill of Rights;) I say supposing you admit all this, yet surely you will vindicate the memory of those heroes, who before any prescription had yet arisen, to sanctify

sanctify the subversive act of incorporation, took arms in 1715 for their liberties, and their Prince ; and shed their blood for their country, *on the scaffold and in the field!* Nay a casuist might even doubt whether in 1745 the settlement had become sufficiently rusty to be entitled to allegiance ; and whether those were Rebels who fell at Culloden, and Tower Hill.

This reasoning, I confess, has been urged by me before ; and I ask my readers pardon for the repetition of what seems to me to have some weight, and has never been refuted.

The inference which I would draw from it is this :—not that any should support Union, who thinks it an impolitic measure ; but that those who resist it, should substitute argument for assertion ; and should also cease to found their opposition upon doctrines subversive of the most settled principles, and favouring of treason to the King and Constitution.

The topick which I have been last treating leads naturally to one, which has been so very amply discussed already, that it is far from my intention to enter deeply on it now : a topick which you flutter round, and occasionally touch, but on which you are too circumspect to dwell : I mean that competence of Parliament, which as you could not venture to controvert directly, it may be doubted whether you were quite candid in impeaching by implication.

This competence is so obvious, that I believe I may even claim to have demonstrated it myself. As for ability, there was no opportunity of displaying any ; but as it requires no talents to shew that two and two make four, it suited well with the mediocrity of mine, to undertake the proof of an almost equally evident proposition. Humble however as my pretensions are, I am too prond to boast of having succeeded in establishing that, which it would be disgraceful to the youngest man of my profession even to doubt ; and which, if a person of the first legal reputation should deny, I might be in suspence as to whether he was ignorant or infincere, but I must pronounce him to be one or other in an eminent degree. Therefore instead of exulting at having accomplished a task on which superior men would scarcely deign to enter,—instead of being vain of having merely repeated the alphabet of our constitution,—I blush to have been obliged to instruct those who should have known better, in the accident, and elements of the government under which they live ; and my excuse for having undertaken so childish an employment must be found in that clamorous and decisive denial of legislative sovereignty, which I am sorry to think issued from an Irish bar, and even found its way into an Irish House of Commons.

Without presuming to do any thing so fulsome as to quote myself, I trust I may be permitted to decline repeating here, those

those arguments which I have already submitted to the publick.—I shall therefore merely beg to be informed by the anti-union sages of the law, what Lord Coke means by pronouncing the power of Parliament to be “so absolute as it cannot be confined within any bounds?” or Blackstone, by declaring it to be “entrusted with despotic power, by the constitution?” How this latter is to be construed, or his authority evaded, when descending to particulars, he lays it down that the legislature may, without exceeding their legitimate powers, “change and create afresh the constitution of this kingdom, and of Parliaments,—as was done by the election statutes, and the act of Union?”

I should moreover beg to know whether that Sovereign-Subject the Mob, (on whose physical consequence the deposed Parliament is ordered, as in a sort of political Saturnalia, to attend,) be by the more every day rules and principles of our government, allowed to legislate otherwise than by exercising the elective franchise? and consequently whether we can limit the constitutional authority of Parliament, without abridging the *merely commensurate* powers of the nation, of which the sole and *exclusive repository* is Parliament?

The above Queries are all so easily answered, that I am tempted to trouble these legal incompetents with a few more; and enquire, with all due deference, whether it makes part of their lately-discovered pantecls, that the House of Lords should be entirely abolished?—or if not, whether we are to recal our tribunes from Fort George,—to carry up to the Peers, for their concurrence, those plebiscites, which may pass by a majority of millions in our new Commons,—our very deliberate, and enlightened multitudinous estate?

I might also, for the benefit of puzzle-headed incompetents, distinguish the present from a widely dissimilar question; and observe that we are enquiring whether Parliament be the constitutional Sovereign; not whether the powers of sovereignty may be abused. Undoubtedly they may: and to a degree so flagrant, as to warrant insurrection. But this holy right (as I think the French have called it) of revolt, I take to be rather an extra-constitutional remedy; and I doubt whether any precedents could be found, of a plea of justification to an indictment for high treason. We are not, on such extreme, and (if I may so express it) intentionally unforeseen occasions, to be hunting for cases in point, in the records of our constitution; or losing the precious moments in argument, or declamation:

—————“*non replenda est Curia verbis :*
“ *Imus in adversos : quid cessas ? an tibi Mavors*
“ *Ventosâ in lingua ?*”

Meantime,

Meantime, while we are perambulating the limits of parliamentary authority, and enquiring whether they be competent to accomplish any given measure, we are bound, as has been well observed, [†] to admit the merits and expediency of that measure. And indeed this postulatum imposes no mighty hardship in the present instance: since we are only required to admit a measure to be expedient, which has been recommended by the King,—deemed necessary by one Parliament of the Empire,—approved of by our upper House of legislature,—its principle constructively acquiesced in by the other,—and which is called for by a great proportion of the territory, population, landed and commercial interests of Ireland; all desiring that it may be discussed, and most that it may be carried. And, if any doubt of the publick sentiment should still remain,—it cannot, however, fail of being effectually collected, on the return of those writs which have been lately issued,—under the signature of two respectable Peers, who (by a sort of topsy-turvy and newly-invented political flight of hand,) being transformed into the representatives of eight and thirty members of the other house, have annexed to the letter, which they circulate in order to collect the unbiased sentiments of the people,—a ready-made opinion of their own: a proceeding calculated to relieve the numerous class which they address, from a task for which they are so ill qualified as that of deliberation; and which discreetly avoids proposing questions to those, whose answers would be any thing but *Responsa prudenter*.

We are to swallow then for a time, (just for argument sake) our indignation at this abominable, parricidal, &c. &c. measure,—which Molyneux thought there was no danger would be ever imposed on Ireland;* and are to enquire whether Parliament be competent to achieve it, supposing it were less impolitick than it is. We are to put the monstrous and absurd hypothesis, that there might be some supposable circumstances under which an Union, on some supposable conditions, would be expedient for this country; and are to enquire whether Parliament would, in such a case, be competent to procure an acknowledged benefit for the nation. Undoubtedly they would: unless to obtain a publick good—be to subvert the constitution; and, by the mere diffusion of prosperity, to justify revolt.

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[†] By Lord Minto. I cite this very fair and judicious observation, because I have no where met with it except in his Lordship's speech. In other instances, where he has with a close and accidental coincidence, urged the same arguments which I had used before, I have thought it unnecessary to quote his Lordship's reasoning; since this would have been an indirect way of referring to myself.

* “ This,” (says Molyneux,) speaking of an incorporate Union between Great Britain and Ireland, “ is a happiness we can hardly hope for.”—State of Ireland, p. 37.

“ As a series of appeals must be finite, there necessarily exists in every government, a power, from which the constitution has provided no appeal; and which power, for that reason, may be termed *absolute, omnipotent, uncontrollable, arbitrary, despotic*; and is alike so in all countries. The person, or assembly, in whom this (omnipotent) power resides, is called the sovereign, or the supreme power of the state.”

“ Since to the same (arbitrary) power universally appertains the office of establishing publick laws,—it is called also the legislature of the state.”

“ A Government receives its denomination from the form of the (despotic) legislature; which form is likewise what we commonly mean by the constitution of a country.”

“ Political writers enumerate three principal forms of government. These are, first absolute monarchy, where the (omnipotent) legislature is in a single person: secondly aristocracy, where the (same uncontrollable) legislature is in a select assembly; the members of which succeed to their places in it, in respect of some personal right, or qualification: and thirdly democracy, where the people at large, either collectively, or by representation, constitute the (still despotic) legislature.”

These three, however, are rather to be understood as the simple forms, by some combination or intermixture of which, all actual governments are composed, than as any where existing in a pure and elementary state.”

Unless, (let it be observed) the doctrine of parliamentary incompetence be well founded: for if it be, then simple uncombined democracy—is the actual established government of Ireland.

“ A mixed government is composed, by the combination of two or more of these simple forms.”* That is to say, the legislative power is not lodged exclusively with a single person,—a select assembly,—or the people at large, but, (still possessing its *essential character* of omnipotence, unabated,) is distributed in portions, amongst some or all of these various interests in the state.

Thus the merits of the measure being admitted,—it being assumed to be a good one,—the question is, whether our Parliament be competent to obtain it? or in other words, (if Archdeacon Paley be right,) whether that omnipotent, uncontrollable, despotic legislature, which constitutes the sovereign power of our state, be possessed of authority sufficient to attain the ends for which it was established,—by procuring the happiness of

* Paley's principles of moral and political philosophy, book 6th. c. 6th. I have quoted verbatim from this writer, making no change, unless by the occasional juxtaposition of sentences, which are separate in the work.

of its subjects;—that primary object of all political institutions? To such a question, I am not afraid to answer in the affirmative.

But let us, with reference to the present question, proceed to see what further has been said by this same writer, of the British Constitution: “The Government of England,” he describes, as “formed by a combination of the three regular species; the monarchy, residing in the King; the aristocracy in the House of Lords; and the republic being represented by the House of Commons.” He afterwards proceeds “to enquire in what manner the Constitution has provided for its own preservation; that is, in what manner each part of the legislature is secured in the exercise of the powers assigned to it, from the encroachment of the other parts. This security is called the balance of the Constitution; and the equilibrium consists in two contrivances,—a balance of power; and a balance of interest. By the former is meant, that there is no power possessed by one part of the legislature, whose abuse, or excess, is not checked by some antagonist power, residing in another part.” With respect to “the House of Lords, the proper use and design of this part of the Constitution, are” (amongst others) “the following. Large bodies of men are subject to sudden phrenzies. Opinions may be circulated amongst a multitude, without proof or examination; acquiring confidence and reputation merely by being repeated from one to another: and passions founded upon these opinions, diffusing themselves with a rapidity that can neither be accounted for nor resisted, sometimes agitate a country with the most violent commotions. Now the only way to stop the fermentation, is to divide the mass: that is, to erect different orders in the community, with separate interests. And this may, occasionally, become the use of an hereditary nobility, invested with a share of legislation;—namely to stem the progress of popular fury. Averse to those prejudices, which actuate the minds of the vulgar,—accustomed to contemn the clamour of the populace,—they will oppose resolutions, which are founded in the folly and violence of the lower part of the community. Was the voice of the people always dictated by reflection, I should hold the interference of a superior order, not only superfluous, but bad. But when we observe what is urged as the publick opinion, to be in truth the opinion only, or perhaps the feigned professions of a few crafty leaders; that the numbers who join in the cry, serve only to swell and multiply the sound, without any accession of judgment, or exercise of understanding; and that oftentimes the wisest councils have been thus overborne by tumult and uproar,—we may conceive occasions to arise, in which the common-wealth may be saved by the reluctance of

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“ the nobility to yield to the vehemence, or adopt the caprices, of the common people.

“ The Constitution is one principal division of the code of publick laws; distinguished from the rest, only by the particular nature, or superior importance of the subject of which it treats. Therefore the terms *constitutional* and *unconstitutional* mean *legal* and *illegal*. The distinction, and the ideas, which these terms denote, are founded on the same authority with the law of the land upon any other subject; and to be ascertained by the same enquiries. The system of English jurisprudence is *made up of acts of parliament*, decisions of courts of law, and *memorial usages*: consequently *these* (legislative acts, &c.) *are the principles of which the constitution itself consists*: the sources, from which all our knowledge of its nature and limitations is to be deduced; and the authorities to which all appeal ought to be made, and by which every constitutional doubt and question can alone be decided. This plain and intelligible definition is the more necessary to be preserved in our thoughts, —as some writers upon the subject absurdly confound what is *constitutional* with what is *expedient*: pronouncing forthwith a *measure to be unconstitutional*, which they adjudge in any respect to be *detrimental*. *An act of Parliament, in England, can never be unconstitutional, in the strict and proper acceptance of the term.*”†

I shall make no apology for the length of an extract, which contains so many just and applicable reflections, and which is highly pertinent to my general subject; besides suggesting the following observations, more peculiarly belonging to the topick which we are upon.

First, if the government, under the theory of which we live, be British,—and if we be to look to acts of Parliament for the principles of our constitution, making them the authorities to which in doubtful cases we should appeal,—and if no statute can, properly speaking, be unconstitutional,—then the question of parliamentary competence has been repeatedly decided, by various acts which have passed: acts operating as material, (though not similar) changes on the constitution, as those projects of reform would have produced, which you supported, without expressing any doubt that Parliament was perfectly competent to adopt them: and lastly, the Scotch Union supplies us with a determination so accurately in point,—that the Anti-Unionists should now follow the advice of Mr. Paley

They should oppose the measure to which they are so hostile, on the mere ground of its impolicy; and abandon their objections to it as unconstitutional; leaving his Majesty in quiet possession of his crown, and renouncing that vile doctrine of Parliamentary incompetence,

† Ibid. c. 7.

incompetence, which robs the peers of their share of legislation, and appeals from the deliberations of the legislature, to the opinion of a few crafty demagogues, echoed by an ignorant and tumultuous populace. Indeed thus to retract is the more incumbent on them, because strange as it may seem, it is very certain, that while they are resisting those legitimate prerogatives of the legislature, the exercise of which may bring about an Union, they are at the same time (in order to defeat this useful measure) attempting to push the authority of Parliament beyond the only limit, which has been set to it by the constitution. A legislature may do every thing but encroach on the omnipotence of that which is to succeed it: but in setting up the acts of the Irish Parliament in 1782, to control the powers of that which is now assembled, they make this vain and unconstitutional attempt; acting in the very teeth of my Lord Coke's position, that "though ' Parliaments have attempted to restrain subsequent Parliaments, ' yet they never could effect it; " for " acts against the power ' of the Parliament subsequent, bind not."*

I have now done with this subject, I trust for ever; and probably should not have said so much upon it, if it were not for my hearing, what it is very difficult to believe,—that an eminent Member of that profession to which I belong, (and which is supposed to imply some knowledge of the law of the land,—intends, by supporting an opinion which not only contradicts the maxims of our constitution, but is repugnant to the first and essential principles of all government, to run a risk which would not be ventured by a man of less reputation; and evince satisfactorily to the publick, that his dispositions are enterprising, and that his character is well established.

I shall now, Sir, proceed to other topicks; and though I may occasionally allude to your printed speech, shall henceforth rather consider the question which you have treated, than investigate the arguments which you have used.

The question is whether a legislative Union of these islands, on just and liberal terms, would be compatible with the freedom, and conducive to the prosperity of this country. Whether such an incorporation would not, under any circumstances, and upon permanent and unalterable principles, be desirable; and whether, from our late calamities, and present prospects, that is not become necessary, which must at all times be expedient? This question I answer, on my conscience, in the affirmative; and towards proving my opinion, the only *datum* which I require is this, that the connexion between the countries is requisite for the welfare and security of both.

Sir, I shall not condescend to notice that vain sophism, as mischievous in its object, as weak in its effect, which insulting the

* 4th Institute 43.

the principles, and good sense of those upright men who support Union, untruly states the question to be this, whether we should give the preference to liberty or connexion; and whether it be of the essence of this latter that Ireland should not be free. I am grieved to find so paltry an assertion intruding itself into the arguments of a man whose talents I have too much discernment not to admire, and whose character I know too intimately not to love. I am grieved to find him[†] so blinded and misled by party, as not to see that it is impossible for this to be the question; considering the part which has been taken by those, of whose integrity he cannot—I will repeat it—*cannot* doubt: I grieve to find him hurried away by a generous prejudice so far—as to overlook a truth, which in calmer moments his good sense must recognise; viz. that there is an independence proper to Union, as well as to distinctness; and that every portion of a state is free, where each part is independent of every other; though all the parts depend upon the whole.

No man of common sense will (with the expectation of being believed) deny either one or other of the following positions; *first*, that since these islands are members (even by anti-union hypothesis) of one empire, it would reconcile the practice with the theory, and contribute to imperial solidity, that they should be governed by one legislature; or in other words that the state should be under the dominion of one Sovereign. *Secondly*, that if instead of altering an old fabrick, we had to erect a new, we could not, without the most manifest desertion of ordinary and established rules, assign to Ireland a proportion of representatives in the common Parliament, equal to the number of those returned by a member of the empire exceeding this in population, resources, and extent; and we should despise the blundering pertness which, in pronouncing that Ireland was enslaved, by returning fewer representatives than were sent by the greater limb of the empire, would in fact imply that Irish freedom could by no means be secured, unless by repealing that very antient law of Nature, which has enacted that a part shall not be equal to the whole.

Is Ireland content to be a part of the empire? The Anti-Unionists answer *yes*;—but their reasoning whispers *no*.

If she be, let her submit to those consequences which must, by the immutable laws of nature, arise from the fractional situation that she has chosen. She must remove the cause, if she would get rid of the effect. The being connected is the cause; and its removal will be separation.

I am tempted to illustrate this part of the inquiry, in a way which if my readers should think unsuitable to the gravity of the subject we are discussing, I might justify, by observing that it is difficult to give a serious answer to a silly argument.

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† See Mr. Bushe's printed Speech.

Let us suppose that Cornwall, professing to be an integral part of the British empire, should however have a distinct Parliament of her own, which it was proposed to incorporate with the principal legislature of Britain. We agree, say the Cornish men, to the principle of incorporation: it remains to know what are to be the terms: how many members shall this district send to the united Parliament? a number, replies the Minister, proportioned to its resources, and situation: for example, forty-four commoners. Instantly the patriotism of Cornwall is up in arms. Forty-four members to the House of Commons! this will be a mere merger of the Cornish Parliament! an absolute extinction of our independence! Shall we thus surrender our constitution? Cornwall, the country of the long-lost Arthur! Cornwall, the primary seat of civility in Britain; whose tin mines were worked, Lord knows how many centuries ago, by the Phenicians!

It cannot be doubted that such strong reasoning would make a due impression, and prevail upon the British administration to allow that Cornwall should return five hundred and fourteen members to the Imperial House of Commons, (this being the sum of British representation:) that she should also thrust every peer she could lay her hands on into the House of Lords; and that from the day of Union no title of nobility, appendant to any other district, should be conferred, without at the same time creating a peer, who should take his title from some territory in Cornwall.

Matters thus arranged, and the united Commons, to the number of above a thousand being assembled, they are alarmed to receive a petition from Derbyshire, insisting upon the loyalty and antiquity of that district,—as long above water, and as well stored with fossils, as any other part of England,—praying the benefit of the Cornish principle,—and that the number of its members should be increased from four to a thousand and twenty-four, so as to balance the residue of British representation, and secure the endangered liberties of Derby.

Under these circumstances I can conceive an enlightened statesman to get up, and warn Parliament how they proceeded farther on a principle, which led to greater embarrassments than perhaps were foreseen. That every county might come forward in succession, and claim the operation of this rule, with as much ground as could be alledged on behalf of Derbyshire or Cornwall: That mean time the representative body would increase, like the price of the horse which was sold at the rate of a penny for the first nail in his shoes, and of making the price of each succeeding nail double that of the one before; till at length there could be no more representatives, for want of more constituents; and the population of Britain would not suffice for the supply of her enormous parliamentary reservoir.

Those who can deride this principle, in the imaginary case of Cornwall, might do well to consider whether it be not the very same which they are setting up so loudly on behalf of Ireland: whether those who object to Union, because our representatives will be less numerous than those of Britain, are doing more than imitating the Cornish claims; and whether their objections can grow less absurd, unless it be by becoming more mischievous; and demonstrating the expediency of separation.

I, for my part, am a sincere friend to the connexion: I have ever been so. But I would suit my practice with my principles; and not rant about my regard for that, which my conduct manifestly tended to dissolve. On these grounds it is that, for now a series of years, and uniformly since I have sat in Parliament, I have supported every important measure of Government, except the Rejection of the Roman Catholic Claims. I have done so, not only without being connected with Administration, but without seeking or possessing that intercourse with them, which usually subsists between Government and even the humblest of its Supporters. Scorning to refute the misrepresentation of those, who described me as a member of opposition, (and who have betrayed me into this short egotism, by presuming lately to speak of me as a man who had changed my principles,) I contented myself with resisting Parliamentary Reform: with supporting the Insurrection Bill, and opposing its Repeal: with concurring to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act: with indemnifying those who had transgressed the Law to save the Constitution: with visiting the crimes of the Traitor on his descendants: with strengthening the hands of Government to an unprecedented degree: with not deserting my post in Parliament to the last. In short, I fought for the connexion, and was not unwilling to let others receive the pay.

But I never ceased to deplore the necessity of that rigour, which I supported; and I now act not only consistently, but (if I may so express it) consequentially, in being the advocate of a system which will keep the empire entire, compatibly with those free principles, that we have hitherto been obliged to sacrifice very largely to its preservation: a system which will trust the security of British connexion, not to penal statutes, or military control; but to the milder yet more effectual influence, and widely diffused blessings of the British constitution.

I do not know whether what I ask pardon for having taken the liberty of saying about myself, goes to prove that I have those claims to credit and attention, which consistency and independence may give to an humble man; but it will at least suggest a reply to those, who in fact do not deserve an answer, when they ask whether this be a moment to propose Union? Now, when the country, languid and exhausted, is yet panting from her efforts in the late rebellion! This is not only wretched argument:

argument: it is miserable declamation: It amounts in fact to this monstrous position, that it is not when a knot is loosened we should make it fast: that having traced to its source a danger from which we have narrowly escaped, and which as long as that source is open, will be likely to recur, we should not be in any hurry to remove the cause which we have thus detected; although the next effect which it produces, may be mortal. Such reasoning proves nothing, or it demonstrates this,—that a prosperous situation it may be expedient to change; but that it would be highly imprudent to modify a system, of which the natural produce seems calamity and discord.

But indeed the Anti-Unionists take such various grounds, that it would be difficult to encounter them with effect, if it were not that this dissension supplies a general argument against them all. One admits that the measure which he resists might be very expedient under certain imaginary circumstances; to wit, those in which according to another Anti-Unionist we now stand. Thus, fortunately for their antagonists, the anti-union batteries are so disposed, that they fire upon each other, and do great execution. The Speaker for example, Sir, does not agree in your picture of this country, as reduced by a train of calamitous measures, to religious divisions, and the condition of a conquest.”* He of course cannot describe this as the tendency of measures, which originated from a cabinet of which he made one. No: that sagacious statesman deriding the puny efforts of separation, and penetrating those scenes of blood and havock which obstruct the views of such inferior politicians as myself, sees nothing round him, but prosperity and peace: the most solid blessings in our actual possession, and the fairest prospects for times to come! Indeed so happy are we, that as he has expressed it in a homely way, we should ask nothing of England, but that she would let us alone.† What is so apparent to that gentleman, I freely confess myself unable to discern; but I much prefer his inference to yours; and should rather decline tampering with a prosperous condition, than with one which I had described as wretched in the extreme.

I support Union—from my regard to the connexion; which in my opinion can no otherwise be secured. If I were a dabbler in reform, and received proposals for constitutions, as some do, I should say British connexion is my fundamental principle: design me a plan as excellent as you can in other respects; but above all let your establishment be one which I can erect on this foundation. If any wise man should set to work in 1800 with these directions, the plan which he must present, would be a legislative Union.

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* Mr. Grattan's Speech.

† If my memory does not deceive me, these or similar expressions occur in the Speaker's Speech.

If it be asked in what consists the good which Union will accomplish? I point, with Mr. Pitt, to the evils which it will prevent: to the security which it will (including Ireland) give the empire. The grand benefit which will result from the measure to this kingdom, (that benefit from which, as from a source, the rest must flow) will be the strengthening the connexion, so as that it cannot be dissolved.

How will Union protect us from invasion? by destroying that hope of separating this country from Great Britain, which at present is our enemy's great inducement to invade us.

How will it promote the wealth and commercial greatness of this country? by removing that mound which has hitherto confined the redundant capital of England, and prevented it from flowing for the benefit of the Irish nation.

Amid disturbance from within, and invasion from without,—those necessary consequences of our present precarious connexion, and of the attempts of enemies and traitors to avail themselves of its weakness, and effect a separation,—it cannot be wondered at, if no Englishman would chuse to trust himself or his capital to a country, where neither life nor property are secure. But take away those impediments,—and what will remain, to countervail the inducements, which its natural situation holds out to the trader to establish himself in Ireland? Mr. Foster, a great authority on such subjects, admits that this country is situated extremely well for commerce; and that “England finds a full “call for all she makes: every year affording an encreasing “demand.”* Here then is an inducement to vest more capital in business; while Ireland, reinstated in those advantages which nature gave, (but which an ill-constructed establishment took away), tempts the adventurer to make choice of it, for the scene of his trade. Add to which, the security that Union gives the empire, will necessarily augment the prosperity, and commercial enterprise of Britain; and be of service to this country in two ways: by rendering England too contracted a sphere for its enormous capital to move in; and by urging the capitalist to avail himself of the peculiar local advantages of Ireland, and make it the theatre of his commercial exertions. *Ceteris paribus*, it is plain that the trader will settle in that place, which is best calculated for the purposes of his commerce; and that when our tranquillity shall have been permanently restored, this principle must operate beneficially for Ireland, is a proposition which it would be superfluous to prove. Yet with what slimy objections has this plain reasoning been encountered? I will prove to you, says Mr. Foster, (too able a man not to estimate truly the argument which he used,) that you must not hope to see the woollen, the cotton, the pottery, or iron manufactures settled amongst you.

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* Speaker's Speech, p. 70.

It is true that this very respectable person failed altogether in the proof of his assertion ; and was refuted not only by others, but by himself : since his positions not only shew that the cheapness of labour and provisions in this country might more than counter-balance the other disadvantages on which he relies ; but after urging the want of fuel as the obstacle to our hopes, he admits that we should find abundance of coal in Ireland, if we had but capital enough to search. But it has always struck me that the case would not have been altered, though he had succeeded in his demonstration. The question was whether we should have the capital ; not how that capital would be employed : whether, in general, we should have trade ; not what particular branches of it might flourish here. The argument resembled his, who should deny that when the dam was removed, the stream that had been imprisoned would issue forth ; and should attempt to prove his denial, by raising doubts as to the channels—in which the water, when it was released, would run.

Union, you say, will take away a great portion of our landed capital, and you tremble for the effect which this removal must have upon the agriculture of Ireland. It must indeed be admitted, that from your own account our tillage is in so languishing a condition, that we have none to spare ; and in being deprived of it, should lose what was possessed of every value that rarity can give. Where “the tenantry had not capital ; and great tracts of land “remained either totally neglected, or superficially improved,”* the country had little to boast of on the score of cultivation.

—*Attamen illud*
Perdidit infelix totum nihil :

Such as it was, Union has destroyed it all. These destructive tendencies of Union I am unable to discern. For not to mention that the fortune which is amass'd in trade is generally vested at last in the purchase of land, so that the communication of a commercial will ultimately give a landed capital ;—it seems mean time no hazardous conjecture, that the increase of wealth, industry, and population, must contribute materially to promoting tillage. “The effect of trade upon agriculture,” (says an ingenious writer,) “is visible in the neighbourhood of trading towns ; and in those districts which carry on a communication with the markets of trading towns. The husbandmen are busy and skilful ; the peasantry laborious : the lands are managed to the best advantage, and double the quantity of corn or herbage raised from it, of what the same soil yields in remoter, and more neglected parts of the country. Wherever a thriving manufactory finds means to establish itself, a new vegetation springs up around it. I believe it is true that agriculture never arrives at any considerable, much less at its

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* Mr. Grattan's words.

" highest degree of perfection, where it is not connected with
" trade; that is, where the demand for the produce is not en-
" creased by the consumption of trading towns."

I do not know why I should quote Paley in support of a truth, so obvious that I might have ventured to state it on my own authority; viz. that corn, like any other article of consumption, will be produced in proportion to the demand which there is for it: and this being the case, I cannot share your apprehensions that Union, in introducing commercial capital amongst us, will fail to promote the agriculture of Ireland.

But will the effect of Union be to encrease our absentees? I sincerely believe not in the degree that some pretend to fear; and others perhaps really apprehend. I will not say whether the case would be altered by a Union, but at least there seems to be nothing in our present distinctness, which induces landed proprietors to reside: and I have somewhere seen it stated that nearly a million of Irish rents went annually from hence, before the number of our absentees was so greatly augmented, as it has been since those late disturbances took place, which were attributable to causes, that Union would remove. Therefore you do not put the matter fairly when you say that the Minister " finds one great absentee draught; and gives us another." One drain, the measure which he proposes would close up; and those whom tumult banished, tranquillity would recall. Whether the kingdoms be united, or be not, London must be the residence of the monarch, and the metropolis of the empire; and as such attract the great and the ambitious, from whatever quarter of the British dominions. But Union, so far from encreasing, will rather in some degree counteract those attractions. I do not mean merely by rendering property secure, and giving Ireland that quiet and prosperity, to which she has so long been a stranger: thus tempting the moderately wealthy to fix their residence in a thriving and tranquil country, where taxes do not deduct so largely from income as in England: I mean by the reward of residence which Union will propose;—viz. a seat in the imperial legislature;—no trivial object of fair ambition to the proudest. Neither will that advantage, which has been noticed by Mr. Pitt, be overlooked by the *real* friends to the connexion; namely, that this transfer of the legislature would disseminate those English feelings, which are quite compatible with the most genuine and patriotick love for Ireland.

I am well aware how much men's principles are strengthened by their habits; and I have very little doubt, (if it be not presumptuous to draw an illustration from the petty and obscure circle of my own experience,) that having been educated in England, and passed the earlier years of my life in that country, contributed more effectually than any reflection could have done —to put my sentiments and principles in unison with each other;

and

and make me consider all my fellow subjects in the light of Countrymen ; on which ever side of the Channel they might happen to have been born.

But neither is it to be forgotten, that though Union should turn some of our present Residents to Absentees,—this effect would be more than counterbalanced by the many beneficial consequences which it would produce : by the restoration of that good order, for the want of which, there is nothing can compensate ; the security of that connexion, which is essential to our welfare ; the consequent introduction of industry and wealth,—and the comfort and improvement of our sordid and degraded people ; the formation of a class which this country greatly wants, for the purpose (amongst others,) which I have mentioned last ;—a description of men that would stop the breaches in our society, and fill up that interval between rich and poor, which forms a gulph that had nearly swallowed up the Constitution ;—and lastly, by the advantage which we might reasonably hope to receive, from having the imperial councils at all times influenced, perhaps sometimes guided, by some of those Peers or Commoners whom Ireland had returned ; men attached to, and acquainted with the interests of their native country. These, Sir, are the bribes which the Minister holds out. I plead guilty in his name, to the charge which you have brought against him : The bribes which he offers are irresistibly attractive ; no less than freedom, prosperity, and peace,—to coerced, impoverished, and distracted Ireland.

Protesting against the justice or propriety of estimating the advantages of Union by its probable effects on the metropolis, exclusively,—I must however refuse my assent to the opinion that even to Dublin it will be at all permanently injurious. Let us balance the account fairly. This city is now the capital of a poor, and idle, and distracted kingdom ; but it is the seat of the Irish legislature. After Union the seat of legislature will be transferred to England ; and the arrangement which involves this transfer, will render Dublin the metropolis of a wealthy, flourishing, and peaceful country. I see nothing for my fellow-citizens to tremble at, in such a change. I presume it cannot be denied either that the prosperity of a capital should be in proportion to that of the state ; or that it will even share principally and pre-eminently in the general welfare ; and that the national circulation will be strongest about the heart. But to this I must add another consideration ; viz. that the grandeur of Dublin would, after Union, be derived from that of Ireland. Being the focus in which the national rays were collected, its splendour would be proportioned to their number and brightness ; and as the city would be interested in the general welfare of the land, this latter would have the advantages which it pouted in, reflected back,

back, and would rise and flourish connectedly with its metropolis.—But what is the situation of Dublin now? its grandeur is not only insulated, and unconnected with that of the country to which it claims to belong, but it is even, in some degree, built upon the degradation and impoverishment of the state. Let Ireland perish—provided Dublin reap the annual profits of a Parliamentary Session!—Is this the sentiment of a citizen of Dublin? and shall we cherish a distinctness which makes the kingdom little,—because short-sighted persons fancy it makes the city great?

But Union will hurt Dublin, by aggrandizing Cork! On the contrary, if the principle which I have laid down be as incontrovertible as I suppose, the metropolis must be served by the aggrandizement of the kingdom in all its parts; and will consequently be enriched by the prosperity of that part of Ireland which we call Cork. There is indeed another mode of putting this objection; but which is founded on a jealousy too paltry to deserve an answer: True! after Union, Dublin may be great; but so, alas! will Cork. This illiberal complaint places the citizens of Dublin exactly in the light of the labourer mentioned in Scripture; who could not object to the hire which he received himself, as too low a price for the work that he had done; but was mortified to find another who had done less, receive the same. The only difference between the cases is, that the man in the parable derived no benefit from the profits of his companion; whereas Dublin must gain advantage from the aggrandizement of Cork.

But let us hear what Adam Smith has said upon this subject. It may be worthy the attention of the inhabitants of Dublin.

“ The whole annual produce of the land and labour of every country, when it comes either from the ground, or from the hands of the productive labourers, naturally divides itself into two parts; one of which is destined for replacing a *capital*, and the other for constituting a *revenue*. That part which replaces capital, pays the wages of productive labour only; it never is immediately employed in maintaining any but productive hands. Unproductive labourers, and those who do not labour at all, are all maintained by revenue. The owners of this revenue might maintain indifferently either productive or unproductive hands; but they seem to have some predilection for the latter. The expence of a great lord feeds generally more idle than industrious people; the capital of a rich merchant maintains industrious people only. The proportion therefore between the productive and unproductive hands, depends very much, in every country, upon the proportion between that part of the annual produce which is destined for replacing a capital, and that which is destined for constituting a revenue.

“ a revenue. This proportion is very different in rich, from what it is in poor countries. Thus at present, in the opulent countries of Europe, a very large, frequently the largest, portion of the produce of the land is destined for replacing the capital of the rich and independent farmer ;” a being so little known in Ireland, that our idea of a yeoman is connected, not with the plough-share, but with the sword ; “ but, antiently, a very small portion of the produce was sufficient to replace the capital employed in cultivation.” This small portion too, together with “ all the rest of the produce, belonged to the landlord ;” and constituted his revenue, either in the form of rent for his land, or profit upon” that “ paltry capital, which was by him advanced to the occupiers of the soil. These were generally bondmen, or tenants at will ;” who “ though they lived at a distance from his house, were equally dependant upon him, as his retainers, who lived in it.” In short the tenantry of those days, in consequence of the dearth of capital, formed a class not very dissimilar to that of Irish cottiers.

“ At present,” too, “ in the wealthy countries of Europe, great capitals are employed in trade and manufactures. In the ancient state, the little trade that was stirring, and the few coarse and homely manufactures that were carried on, required but very small capitals.”

“ That part of the annual produce, therefore, which, as it comes from the ground, or from the hands of the productive labourers, is destined for replacing a capital, is not only much greater in rich than in poor countries, but bears a much greater proportion to that which is destined for constituting a revenue, either as profit, or as rent.”—In other words, the funds, (viz. that capital which Dublin wants,) destined for the maintenance of productive labour, are not only much greater in opulent countries than in poor ones, but bear a much greater proportion to those funds, (composed of that revenue, which is now expended in this metropolis,) “ which, though they may be applied to maintain either productive or unproductive hands, are generally employed not in feeding the industrious, but in pampering the idle.

“ The proportion between these different funds necessarily determines, in every country, the general character of the inhabitants, as to industry or idleness. We are more industrious than our forefathers, because, in the present times, the funds destined for the maintenance of industry, are much greater in proportion to those, which are likely to be employed in the maintenance of idleness, than they were two or three centuries ago. Our ancestors were idle, for want of a sufficient encouragement to industry.

“ The

" The annual produce of the land and labour of any Nation
 " can be increased in its value by no other means, but by in-
 " creasing either the number of its productive labourers, or the
 " productive powers of those who had before been employed.
 " In either case, an additional capital is required. When we
 " compare therefore the state of a Nation at two different pe-
 " riods, and find that the annual produce of its land and labour
 " is evidently greater at the latter, than at the former,—that its
 " lands are better cultivated, its manufactures more numerous
 " and more flourishing, and its trade more extensive,—we may
 " be assured that its capital must have increased, during the in-
 " terval between those two periods." *

But I should apologize to those sound Logicians, who sustain the anti-union cause, for having presumed to quote a writer of the Analytic class.

Having objected to Union *in the abstract*, those grave and consistent personages complain that we have accepted the aid of *abstract reasoning*, to confute them. They are indignant that we should argue a principle which they refuse to concede: calling upon us to treat the question in the concrete; and with reference to those terms, which yet, they refuse to hear propounded.

If this objection came from those puzzled intellects, whose only talent is that of rendering confusion worse confounded,—and who mistake every thing that is comprehensive, or even rational, for metaphysics,—men who would consider the analysis of a loaf into its ingredients, as the mere sport of subtilty and metaphysical refinement,—and overlook the useful inference to which this abstract reasoning might lead; viz. that it would be vain to build the oven, unless you sowed the corn;—I say, I should not be surprised, if the clumsy objection came from such a quarter. But if a man of undoubted talents undertake to dispatch the solid arguments which have been used against him,—with a cursory parenthesis, of “*so say the Metaphysicians*,”—I will complain of his treating that reasoning with sarcasm, which he has not answered; and which has been relied on by his friend. When disputing the analogies on which I had insisted, he informs me that

* Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations—book 2d. ch. 3d. ——I have in the above extract taken the same liberty, which I did in quoting from Archdeacon Paley,—and with a view to omitting every thing that was not directly relevant to my subject, have united paragraphs, which are separate in the work. I have, also for the purpose of rendering the reasoning more consecutive, changed the turn of expression in one or two instances; but the alteration has been so slight, as to be scarcely worth taking this notice of. Neither is my extract in any respect a garbled one: the passages which I have omitted so far from contradicting, do not even qualify the positions which I have cited ——The Reference that I have given my readers will enable them to turn to the book itself, and ascertain the truth of what I have said.

that “in Wales, or Yorkshire, there are no distinct executives; but “that nature has determined these two countries not to be sufficiently “proximate for a common executive,”—I shall not meddle with his inference, but dispute his assertion; and oppose him, not with an argument, but with a law: a law so fundamental, as the act of annexation. He will there learn that these countries are sufficiently proximate for a common executive: and if he pursues the enquiry, and examines our modification of the law of Poynings, he will find that our patriotic legislature of 1782, thought them sufficiently proximate for the admission of a principle, which subjects the acts of the Irish executive, and royal estate, through the medium of its ministers, to the control of a British Parliament. If he calls on me to “figure to myself an Irish “executive government, with its responsibility as distant as “Westminster,” I will tell him that it is not mere hypothesis; but is *very nearly* matter of fact; and that he is not painting what after Union the situation of things would be; but what in *a great degree* it is at present. I will suggest to him that the responsibility of a British Minister, to a Parliament containing a hundred representatives from this country, must afford a better protection to the interests of Ireland,—than can arise from his being answerable for his measures to a legislature, in which no member returned by Irish constituents is included. But I will not proceed further.—I will not use the privilege which perhaps he has given me,—by describing the measure which I support, as a total and vile surrender of the liberties of Ireland; and the arguments which I used, as mere flimsy textures of metaphysical finesse, beneath which I vainly sought to hide those chains, with which I was basely conspiring to load my country. I will not enquire whether, if the King’s being “obliged to act here by “viceregal deputation” prove any thing,—it does not demonstrate this,—that the laws of nature are at variance with the act of annexation? or whether the principles on which my valuable,—but on this occasion, I think, prejudiced—friend has rested our claims to an independent Parliament, would not alike entitle us to what we have not,—an independent crown?†—But I will ask whether if “England has for centuries uniformly plundered “and oppressed us,—if the British nation has for ages shackled, “paralized, despised, and kept our country down,”—it be not incumbent on every Irishman who loves his native land, to rid us of a yoke so galling and disgraceful,—and, instead of looking “on British connexion as a polar principle in politicks,”—to withdraw from the blasting influence which has withered our prosperity, and break for ever with this rapacious and treacherous

* Mr. Bushe’s printed Speech.

† In the preamble of Stat. 4th Wm. and Mary, c. 1. s. 1. the kingdom of Ireland is declared to be rightfully *depending upon* the imperial crown of England.

ally? I will ask this,—because it is my duty to warn a friend whom I sincerely regard, of the danger which he is in: to shew him that the arguments which he has inadvertently adopted, can no otherwise dissuade from Union, than by recommending separation; and thus to stop him, even roughly, at the brink of a precipice,—to which nothing but a generous prejudice could have led him; and from which, when he sees the gulph, his loyalty will recoil.

But having got through what I suppose will be called Adam Smith's Metaphysics, let us listen to his facts. "In mercantile, " and manufacturing towns where the inferior ranks of people "are chiefly maintained by the employment of capital, they "are in general industrious, sober, and thriving; as in many "English, and in most Dutch towns. In those towns which are "principally supported by the constant, or occasional residence "of a court, and in which the inferior ranks of people are "chiefly maintained by the spending of revenue," (as is the case of Dublin) "they are in general idle, dissolute, and poor; "as at Rome, Versailles, Compiegni, and Fontainbleau. There "is little trade or industry in any of the Parliament towns of "France; and the inferior ranks of people being chiefly maintained by the expence of the members of the courts of justice, "and of those who come to plead before them, are in general "idle and poor. In these towns, very little more capital seems "to be employed, than what is necessary for supplying their "own consumption; that is, little more than the smallest capital, which can be employed in them. The same thing may "be said of Paris, Madrid, and Vienna. Of these three cities, "Paris is the most industrious; but Paris is itself the principal "market of all the manufactures established there; and its own "consumption is the chief object of all the trade which it carries "on. London, Lisbon, and Copenhagen are, perhaps, the "only three cities in Europe, which are both the constant residence of a court, and can at the same time be considered as "trading cities, or as cities which trade not only for their own "consumption, but for that of other cities and countries;" and the reason for this phenomenon seems to be, that "the situation "of all three is extremely advantageous: and naturally fits them "to be the entrepots of a great part of the goods, destined for "the consumption of distant places." In a word, the many other favourable circumstances attending their situation, have more than made amends for this drawback; and thus they have become exceptions to a general rule, and been enabled upon the whole to surmount that obstacle to their commercial greatness, which was occasioned by the constant residence of a Court.

But such rare examples do not render it less true, as a general position, that "in a city where a great revenue is spent,—to "employ

“ employ with advantage a capital for any other purpose, than
 “ merely for supplying the consumption of that city, is probably
 “ more difficult, than in one in which the inferior ranks of people
 “ have no other maintenance, but what they derive from the
 “ employment of such a capital. The idleness of the greater
 “ part of the people who are maintained by the expence of re-
 “ venue, corrupts, it is probable, the industry of those who
 “ ought to be maintained by the employment of capital; and
 “ renders it less advantageous to employ a capital there, than in
 “ other places. There was little trade or industry in Edinburgh,
 “ before the Union. When the Scotch Parliament was no longer
 “ to be assembled in it, when it ceased to be the necessary resi-
 “ dence of the principal nobility, and gentry of Scotland, it
 “ became a city of some trade, and industry. It still, however,
 “ continues to be the residence of the principal Courts of Justice
 “ in Scotland, of the Boards of Customs and Excise, &c. A
 “ considerable revenue, therefore, still continues to be spent in
 “ it.” And what is the consequence? “ In trade and industry it
 “ is much inferior to Glasgow; the inhabitants of which are
 “ chiefly maintained by the employment of capital. The inhab-
 “ itants of a large village, it has sometimes been observed, after
 “ having made considerable progress in manufactures, have be-
 “ come idle and poor, in consequence of a great Lord’s having
 “ taken up his residence in their neighbourhood.”

Such are the facts which this intelligent writer has collected; and the fair conclusion which he deduces from them is this, that “ the proportion between capital and revenue seems every where “ to regulate the proportion between industry and idleness. “ Wherever capital predominates, industry prevails: wherever “ revenue, idleness. Therefore every increase of capital,” (and diminution of the relative proportion of revenue,) “ naturally “ tends to increase the real quantity of industry,—the value of “ the annual produce of the land and labour of the country,— “ the real wealth of all its inhabitants.”*

Such is the reasoning with which this acute writer has obviated the apprehensions of our metropolis; and, by anticipation, recommended the present system to its acceptance. A system, which as well on principle, as from the example of Edinburgh, he (a Scotchman) infers would instead of injuring, advance the trade of Dublin: and one, under which its opulence being derived from the employment of capital, not the squanderings of revenue,—a fund would thus be raised for the reward of industry, instead of that which is now perverted to the encouragement of dissipation.

These arguments will weigh nothing with those, who would rather receive payment for being idle, than for being laborious: with

* Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, book 2, chapter 3.

with those who contemplate with pleasure the splendour of their native city erected on the basis of its luxury and vice ; and are at this moment perhaps employed in exciting its starving manufacturers, against the system which would feed them ; and in favour of that under which they famish : with those who accustomed to live on the scramble of faction, or by the arts of corrupt intrigue, are reluctant to part with the warehouse, and implements of their calling ; destitute as they are of talents, principles, or habits, which might enable them to gain their livelihood by some better means : with those in short who can, without blushing, ask permission to fatten on the miseries of their impoverished country.

But there are men,—with whom such reasoning will have weight : who see nothing desirable in a situation where the lower ranks of society feed upon the vices of the higher orders, and are infected ; and where, that the metropolis may not lose the splendours of its parliament,—the peasant, suffering the penalties of our general want of industry and capital, must pine away his life in a hovel scarcely human ; or yielding to the instigation of some busy traitor,—perhaps terminate it ignominiously, a prey to those seductions, to which his wretchedness and ignorance had but too much exposed him. Such men will eagerly embrace a change, which will build the grandeur of the city on the morals of its inhabitants ; and even lay its broad and patriotic foundations in the general prosperity and virtue of the land.

The proposed measure of legislative Union will promote the trade and manufactures of Ireland in two ways : it will bestow upon us what we have not : and secure to us what we have. *First*, it will remove the political impediments, which at present obstruct our commercial progress ; and “ give us the means of “ improving our great natural resources. It will communicate “ to us all the commercial advantages, which Great Britain pos-“ sesses : will open the markets of the one country to the other ; “ and by giving them both the common use of their capital, “ diffuse a large portion of wealth into Ireland.”* *Secondly*, “ it will both confirm, by irrevocable compact, that profitable “ trade which we enjoy at present ; and by identifying the inte-“ rests of the united countries, will give us a security for its con-“ tinuance, worth a thousand contracts.”†

That Union must produce the first of these effects, seems to me to be already sufficiently proved : and upon that point I shall only add, (calling in authority to the aid of truth,) that Adam Smith long since pronounced, that Union would produce to Ireland the most important benefits, both civil and commercial ; and that Dean Tucker conceived it to be so advantageous to our trade,

* See Mr. Pitt's Speech. † Ibid.

trade, that his object was to conquer British prejudice. He sought to reconcile the narrow-minded of that nation to a measure, which, though it must materially serve this country, yet—as it would identify the interests of the two imperial states, and strengthen that empire which they composed, and whose security was their own,—ought not to be impeded by selfish considerations, and should be the wish of every disinterested patriot in England. To these I should beg to add the authority of my esteemed friend Mr. Redford; the unfulfilled integrity of whose character would render his support a valuable acquisition; even though the work which he has published in favour of Union, were less replete with sound, and persuasive reasoning, and with pertinent and material facts, than to my understanding it seems to be. But above all, I would add the authority of a person, who on such a subject is surely entitled to be heard with peculiar attention; and who has publicly and expressly declared it to be his opinion, “that a Union would benefit both the landed and “commercial interests of Ireland.”*

I shall therefore proceed at once to consider briefly the second operation to be expected from this measure; viz. the securing that trade which we possess already.

In order to calculate the benefits of Union in this respect, we should consider, first, whether our present commercial intercourse with Great Britain be so advantageous to this country, as to be worth preserving; and secondly, whether its continuance depends on covenant, or is precarious: if the latter, we must desire a measure which will secure it.

In estimating “the comparative utility of different branches of national commerce,” and assigning “to the several kinds, and divisions of foreign trade, their respective degrees of publick importance,” we shall find “the first place belong to the exchange of wrought goods, for raw materials; because this traffic provides a market for the labour that has already been expended; at the same time that it supplies materials for new industry.”†

Again, “the balance of trade is said to be against, or in favour of a country, as it tends to carry money out, or to bring it in: that is, according as the price of the imports exceeds, or falls short of, the price of the exports.”§

Let us examine the nature of our commercial intercourse with England, by these principles; adopting the statements of Mr.

* See the Speech of the Right Hon. David Latouche, in the debate of January 15th, 1800, as printed in the Dublin Journal of January 31st.

† Paley's Moral and Political Philosophy, book 6th, chap. 11th. § Ibid.

Mr. Foster,—which it is to be presumed no Anti-Unionist will dispute.

In 1785 we exported to the amount of more than two millions and a half to Britain; while the amount of our imports did not exceed one million. In other words, a settlement of commercial accounts between the islands, at that period, left the balance of trade three-fifths in favour of Ireland; and in the interval between that time and the present, this balance has much increased, and the British market become still more valuable; England's consumption of Irish produce now exceeding the amount of what she sends to us, in a greater proportion than it did in 1785.

But this is not all: not only the balance of trade is in our favour, but the nature and quality of the commercial intercourse is beneficial to this country. It consists in a great degree of the "exchange of wrought goods, for raw materials;" and of goods, withal, for which, "if Britain should discourage their import," Mr. Foster doubts whether "we could find a market elsewhere:" a doubt which is warranted by fact and experience; since of the entire of our grand and predominant export, (linen) seven-eighths go to Britain, and the British settlements.

Britain furnishes us, says Mr. Foster, "Salt, by which we are enabled to prepare our provisions for the Navy: Hops, "which we have not: Coals, Tin, and Bark."

Thus, even if the balance of trade were not in our favour,—if our exports to Great Britain merely equalled the value of our imports from that Country,—yet still the intercourse would be advantageous to Ireland; insomuch as traffic, thus consisting of the exchange of our manufactures for raw materials, would provide a market for the labour which we already had expended, at the same time that it supplied materials for new industry: and it would not alter the case, to ascertain that in preparing the articles which we thus imported, some labour had been employed in England. Still the principle would not be affected: we should still be finding vent for Irish manufacture; and supplying ourselves with the materials of fresh industry. "But these articles constitute more than half of what is sent us."* Therefore merely to calculate the amount of the commercial balance in our favour, is by no means to estimate justly the value of our trade with Britain. On the contrary, it admits of doubt, whether we ought not, in casting up our imports, to deduct all articles of the nature of raw materials; and strike the balance on a mere comparison of the amount of exported and imported manufactures. Indeed, to controvert this principle, would be impliedly to insist on the value of that kind of trade, which, in virtue of our want of Capital, we now possess; and which consists for example, in the export of our Hides, and re-importation of them in the form of

* Mr. Foster.

of leather : a sort of Commerce, which we do not need the authority of Mr. Paley for pronouncing to be of the most disadvantageous description ; and which I admit is likely to be lessened, indeed annihilated, by Union.

But above all, I do not fear that this doctrine of mine will be opposed by Mr. Foster ; who fully concedes my principle, when he represents our provisions, (those articles of prime necessity, which we have the kindness to send to England,) as mere raw materials, (for the manufacture of able-bodied seamen I presume;) and thus adduces an argument, which he had refuted by anticipation, when (in 1785) he described the salt which we imported, as a sort of raw material, necessary for the curing and manufacture of our provision.

Another circumstance, urged by Mr. Foster, ought not to be forgotten ; viz. that we raise a revenue on what we import from Britain : thus making that country (as it strikes me*) contribute to the expence of the Irish Government : for if it be said that the duty is paid by the consumer, I answer that as England imports more than she exports, she is ultimately that consumer.

But these allowances may all be waved : and even (delusively) stating the balance of trade between the countries, in the most unfavourable way to Ireland, we shall find this country a gainer by the intercourse, to the amount of above two millions yearly.

Having thus shewn the value of our commercial intercourse with Britain, (a value resulting as well from the quality of what we import, as from the amount of our exports) it remains to enquire whether the advantages of this commerce be at present precarious ; and would by Union be irrevocably secured.

The continuance of a system, to which Great Britain is not bound by any specific compact to adhere, it requires no argument to prove, must be precarious. Depending upon the mere pleasure of that country, it may be abandoned on grounds of real, or mistaken policy ; and is even liable to be relinquished, from irritation or caprice.

I have heard it asserted, I admit, that the linen trade of Ireland rests on no such insecure foundation ; but that on the contrary, its encouragement is the mere performance of an agreement. But this alledged covenant has eluded my strictest investigation ; and I must crave oyer of that contract, which you charge the British Minister with having denied. *Litera scripta manet* : if the treaty has existence, it may be found.

But the fact is, that it is a mere creature of the imagination : one of the phantoms conjured up by your party, against Union. This branch of Irish trade, in reality, depends upon the duties which

* This consequence strikes me on the sudden. I shall not therefore answer for the truth of the principle ; but it seems to me to be a sound one.

which Great Britain imposes on foreign linens ; and the bounties which she grants on the export of those, which have been manufactured in this country.

The truth of the above position cannot be disputed ; and is in fact confessed by Mr. Foster and yourself whence, vading the real question, you discuss what I take to be sufficiently immaterial, namely, whether those bounties were granted for the sake of Ireland.

That the British Legislature may repeal provisions which they have themselves made, is a proposition too-self-evident for proof ; nor is the inference less manifest ; viz. that the duration of our present commercial benefits, though it may be likely, yet is not secure.

That visionary Compact on which Mr. Foster relies, he will not assert to have been entered into since 1785. At that period therefore, our trade was not less secure than it is at the present day ; and every argument which proved the expediency of concluding an advantageous commercial agreement, then, will *a fortiori* recommend the entering into a still more beneficial treaty now. I therefore shall not presume to add to Mr. Foster's conclusive reasoning, in favour of Union, (considered in a commercial point of view;) or attempt to shew "that an adjustment, " which for ever confirms all the advantages we derive from our "linen trade, and incapacitates England from making any law " that can be injurious to it," should be eagerly embraced by all who regard that trade ;* but shall merely observe that the Compact for which he argued so strongly then, has not been entered into since ; and (with additional advantages) is offered now.

I shall not take up my readers time, by dwelling on that passage in your Speech, in which it is said that "the bounty on " linen was not granted for the sake of Ireland,—and that Irish "linen sells itself ;" but shall cursorily remark, that, if the interests of this Country were not what the English Parliament had in view, the policy was not very obvious, which by laying duties upon continental linens, incurred retaliating duties, imposed in the foreign markets, on English woollen manufactures ; and advanced the price, both of German and Irish linen, so considerably on the British consumer, as to make England, on the whole, pay annually above a million.

I chuse rather to advert to another consideration, which this remark of yours suggests : namely, that it is inconsistent with the general tenor of your reasoning, to underrate the value of an arrangement, which substitutes a solemn covenant, as the security of Irish trade in the room of that liberality of the British Parliament.

* See Mr. Foster's Speech on Mr. Orde's Commercial Bill.

ment, on which our commerce depends at present ; and on which you do not seem disposed implicitly to rely.

You, who refer our present security, not to the cordial sentiments which should unite two members of one common empire, but to a nice balancing of the powers of molestation, and retaliation, should not, methinks, reject a plan, which by “incapacitating England from making any law that can be injurious to our linen trade,* will render British illiberality innocuous.” Surely if we were to admit your doctrines in their full extent, we must for that very reason prefer a situation which provided for our safety by disarming Britain, to one which leaving it in her power to aim a blow, merely balanced this—by our ability to return it.

But that same competition of interest, which you most sophistically rely on as a reason against Union, you forget to admit as an argument for compact ; when in fact this rivalry (whether between individuals or nations) is the foundation and origin of all agreements whatsoever ; these being mere expedients, resorted to for obviating its effects.

The sophistry of relying on such diversity of interests, consists in your assuming, that when the countries had become united, their interests would continue contrariant and distinct. You pervert the jealousies which exist at present, into arguments against confounding the distinctness from which they flow ; and the datum which is required towards supporting your conclusions, is—that an effect may remain after its only cause has been removed ; and that when all its parts shall have been intimately blended, the British empire will notwithstanding be at variance with itself.

I shall not attempt to justify the treatment which, for a long time, this country experienced from Great Britain. Mr. Pitt has himself represented it as harsh ; and the most unfair advantage is taken of an avowal, which at once did honour to his candour, and gave assurance to Ireland that a conduct thus reprobated will not be resumed, when, by Union, those circumstances shall have been put an end to, which afforded the only ground or pretext for its adoption.

It is more strange—than unusual—that from the same premises, different persons should deduce almost opposite conclusions. Thus, that very illiberality on the part of England, which appears to supply you with an inference against Incorporation, furnishes to my understanding an argument for the measure.

If indeed I were to agree with those, who describe such treatment as the mere result of Great Britain’s *instinctive enmity* to Ireland, I should regard it as more than a reason against Union : I should consider it as an argument for separation ; and should, on principle—try, by severing the connexion, to tear my country from the clutches of her malignant foe.

* See Mr. Foster’s printed Speech in 1785.

But I regard the control, which we have endured, as the effect of a mistaken policy,—more justifiable in its object than in its means:—a policy which had its origin and excuse in that distinctness, to which England has at length the generosity to put an end; and which every Irish patriot should concur in desiring to see irrevocably abolished.

That the sister country should, with a sort of gratuitous ill will, desire to mar the prosperity of Ireland,—that Britain should observe with uneasiness and reluctance, the welfare of a portion of the British empire, is an hypothesis too absurd and extravagant for belief. Instincts are given towards self-preservation; but this instinctive enmity would aim at self-destruction.

But however warmly she might wish to see Ireland prosperous, this sentiment would still be subordinate to another; I mean her desire that the islands should remain connected. Nor could this be deemed an illiberal postponement; inasmuch as “in the general strength of the empire,” (which any loosening of the connexion must impair,) “both kingdoms are more concerned, than in any particular interests which may belong to either;” § and therefore the sentiment which I have ascribed to British policy, would not be unbecoming even Irish patriotism.

Independence, grafted, as ours has been, upon that distinctness which is in fact a *degree* of separateness, is from its very nature and basis, at variance with intimate, and therefore secure connexion; and is liable to be perverted into an instrument of separation. I appeal to the experience of every loyal and candid Irishman, whether our independence has not been so abused? and I caution those who are so fond of making 1782 emphatically the commencement of Irish greatness—and who tracing our prosperity in no degree to the connexion, refer it all to the wonderful efficacy of a local Parliament,—to beware how they inadvertently support the doctrines of Mr. Tone; who in an anti-union work of his, addressed to the people of Ireland, (and of which several copies were taken by Sir John Warren’s squadron,) agrees with them in dating Irish advancement from 1782: agrees that Ireland has prospered, in proportion as the line of her distinctness has been more strongly marked; in other words, in proportion to her estrangement from Great Britain; and calls upon the people to complete the work which they have begun, and consummate the prosperity of Ireland, by separation.

Is it matter for surprise, if so long as it might be doubtful whether “the power of Ireland was to be that of England,” * this latter should watch the progress of such power with distrust? Is it extraordinary if so long as it remained uncertain whether this country was “to be part of the strength of Britain, or an

“acquisition

§ See Mr. Pitt’s Speech.

* Ibid.

“acquisition for the enemies” † of both,—attachment to the interests of the empire, nay of Ireland, should produce a vigilant jealousy of that advancement, which might ultimately involve these islands in one common ruin? and shall we not be eager to correct a system, which unnaturally opposing our freedom and connexion to each other, gave England ground to fear that in promoting our prosperity, she might be but enabling separatists to wield with more effect, the weapon which our distinctness had put into their hands? Abolishing this perverse order of things, which provoked a conduct “unworthy the liberality of Great Britain,” ‡ shall we not gladly embrace that improved system, which will enable us confidently from henceforth to pronounce, that “the interests of the two countries *must* be taken together; “ and that a man cannot speak as a true Englishman, unless he “speaks as a true Irishman; nor speak as a true Irishman, unless he speaks as a true Englishman?” §

Yes: congratulating Great Britain on that liberal change of principle, which induces her to consult the integrity of the empire, not by checking our growing strength, but by uniting it with her own, let us, without loss of time become prosperous and secure, by exchanging a distinct for an incorporate independence.

I had proceeded nearly thus far, * when the Lord Lieutenant’s message being delivered to the House of Commons, the terms of Union were disclosed by a Noble Lord, on whom my respect for him makes me rejoice to see the illustrious task devolve, of bidding his country become free and prosperous for ever.—The splendour of these terms supersedes all inferior arguments for Union; and the man must be more phlegmatick than I desire to be, who can listen to them, and withhold his admiration.

By these, as if the British constitution were not of itself a boon worthy our acceptance, advantages are secured in commerce and finance, equalling the fondest hopes we could have formed, and almost exceeding the powers of calculation. Upon a principle, the fairness of which is beyond dispute, the contribution of Ireland will be proportioned to its ability, and that ability be measured by an accurate criterion; nor will any power be given to the Imperial Parliament of altering or revising this principle, in any respect; but merely of ensuring its future application, and making the ability of Ireland the eternal and invariable standard of her contribution. A discretion, which must be felt necessary to be given to the common legislature, by all who concur in the opinion which I entertain, that the inevitable consequences of Union will be to encrease the relative ability of prospering Ireland.

Nor

† Mr. Pitt’s Speech. ‡ Ibid. § Ibid.

* One hundred and four pages of this Letter were already printed on the day on which the message was delivered.

Nor will this principle be less favourable to our country, in its effect, than it is obviously just and equitable in its nature; but, operating to lessen considerably the present amount of our taxation, will give an auspicious specimen of the readiness of England to make a great pecuniary sacrifice, and scorning the delusive and Fordid arguments of selfish policy, to regard the interests of Ireland as the aggrandizement of the Empire.

When you ridicule all pretensions to liberality, on the part of Britain,*—I will point to the terms of Union as my answer: to the fair conditions of that generous Treaty, by which, without proposing to entangle us in her difficulties, she merely solicits us to participate in her greatness: retaining her debt, while she imparts to us her prosperity; and exempting us *altogether* from the operation of that maxim, which prescribes that those who derive the benefit, shall bear the burthen. Sir, it suited the magnanimity of that glorious Country, the champion of invaded liberty and good order, to refute such imputations, not by words, but by a conduct which History will record, and Posterity must admire. It became her situation, to acquire *peculiar* claims, in the case of Ireland, in addition to that title which she had already, to general gratitude from the whole civilized, and by her protected world.

I have now gone through the most important topicks of your Speech; animadverting by the way, both upon them and your general politicks, with that freedom which we hold ourselves privileged to use, in examining the conduct and opinions of a publick man; yet, I trust, without having deviated from the respect, which on all occasions one gentleman owes another,—and which, in your case, I should be peculiarly sorry to transgress: since, however, strongly I disapprove of much of your political conduct, I will not be prevented by this sentiment of blame, still less by any feeling of party zeal, from recollecting what is due not only to your talents, but to the distinguished share which you had in the transaction of 1782, and the honourable part which you acted, about the commencement of the present War: and I take this opportunity of requesting you, Sir, and my other Readers, to qualify with the above tribute—the strength of any censure, which in the warmth of discussion I may have been, or still may be, induced to apply to your language, or your measures: a tribute which certainly has sincerity to recommend it; and of which the value will be best estimated by recollecting, that though I am appealing you before the tribunal of publick opinion, in order to weaken the force of your testimony against a salutary measure, yet I have scorned to resort to those charges against your character,

* Liberality of England to Irish Commerce! She was liberal “never.”
&c. &c.—Mr. Grattan’s Speech.

acter, which have not been so proved, as to bring conviction to my mind; but to which many in my circumstances would have more than alluded.

I state myself to have investigated all your material topicks; for as to that inconsistency, which you impliedly charge on government, by contrasting their opposition to a modus, when formerly proposed by you, with their supposed intention of connecting one with the present Union,—the imputation is disproved by simply observing, that the same measure which under one order of things would be subversive, might under another and dissimilar one, be desirable and safe;

Your remarks upon the clergy are no less answerable, and inconclusive. Is it disgraceful to Roman Catholic Ecclesiastics, that they countenance a measure, which, while it infuses an assuaging portion of morality and intelligence, into the physical force of their at present fierce and brutal flock, (a character which I ascribe to them not as Catholics, but as rabble,) at the same time, by providing for their priesthood, links the interests of that body to the constitution; and is calculated to increase the knowledge, influence, and respectability, of those whose task it is to diffuse religious instruction amongst the people? Again, is “the perpetual security of our established church”*—a bribe, which the Protestant clergy can be dishonoured by accepting? No, Sir: that sacred body stands far beyond the reach of scurrilous reproach; and in supporting Union, they pursue a conduct which can not only be justified, but should be praised; a conduct which suits the mild and peaceable doctrines of that religion which they preach. It well becomes their holy function, to countenance a change which shall stop the effusion of civil blood: which shall soften those malignant passions that have so long raged amongst us, and almost swept away the virtue of the land: which shall substitute industry, in place of that idleness which is the nurse of vice: which shall lead the inhabitants of this torn country to fulfil the duties of a christian people, by loving one another,—and paying obedience to the constituted authorities of the state: which shall found the security of the Protestant Church upon a basis, compatible with the indulgence of that cordial trust and confidence, which ought to prevail amongst all the ministers of one gospel,—amongst all the branches of one common faith: in short, a measure, which whilst it tends to fortify an empire, now waging the holy war of religion against impiety,—accomplishes this desirable, and glorious object, not by sacrificing an atom of the liberties of Ireland, but by acquiring for her the full privileges of the British constitution.

Sir, I have heard much of the distinguished loyalty of those, by whom the measure of Union is opposed; and I admit that

loyal

* Mr. Grattan's words.

loyal characters are to be found in the anti-union ranks ; who by insisting so much on their past attachment to the constitution, indirectly confess that their affection for their Sovereign, and the empire, is more evinced by their former, than their present conduct.

But there is a description of persons, (I do not say in Parliament,) whose loyalty is of a base and spurious kind ; and of whose co-operation you have no reason to be proud. Men who, not actuated by any generous sentiment, have hitherto followed the trade of allegiance, merely because they found it a more profitable one than that of sedition. Men who, profligately consilient, are led to oppose the present government, by the same motive which induced them to support all past ;—by corrupt selfishness,—not publick spirit.

Such, whilst they make an uproar about their loyalty, in fact resist Union for no other reason, but that though it may advance the commerce of their country, they are well aware it must extinguish theirs. British connexion they consider as a sort of state commodity, for which England ought to deal, on their own terms, with them. They promise to supply this article of prime necessity, so long as they are permitted to vend it to the sister country, and to monopolize the emoluments of the sale : and though of late the crops have been but sorry,—yet aided by the strong hand of coercion, and continuing to manure with Irish blood, they make no doubt of having permanent and abundant harvests ; and think it hard that their exclusive traffick should be spoiled, by Britain's beginning to purchase from the whole Irish nation, and while she employs the people indiscriminately to cultivate the connexion, by paying their labours with the British constitution.

Such reasoning may be forcible, but it is not patriotick ; and I shall not waste my time by addressing those who use it ; but must apply myself to another, and very different class, whose principled loyalty I both acknowledge and admire,—and whom therefore, I grieve to find inadvertently in array—against the prosperity of their harassed country.

I will ask them, and with the question, (almost) conclude this tedious Letter, What are their expectations in opposing Union ? Do they hope to see that order of things revived, which some have described as a colonial system ? Can they hope that the strength of Government will cooperate to restore a system, the defects of which they have been necessitated to disclose, and for which they see no effectual remedy, but Incorporation ? Will Administration, to accommodate these gentlemen, recur to the plan of extorting by coercion, a precarious allegiance from a poor, ignorant, discontented, and misguided multitude,—instead of watching *perseveringly*, for the moment to make a change, which

which shall render loyalty the unforced, and ready offering of a prosperous, an instructed, and contented people? Is it to be expected, that for the mere gratification of a loyal party, a Government which rightly estimates the affections of the subject, and feels them to be the best security of the throne, will for ever abandon a measure so deliberately proposed, and so explicitly declared to be in their opinion indispensable? a measure too, which has been solemnly called for by the common Sovereign, and approved of in one of the Parliaments of the Empire? Is it to be imagined, I say, that administration will relinquish such a measure,—and permanently substitute a system in its room, where, in order to guard the constitution from attack, we are obliged to strip it of every principle which secures the liberty, and excites the zealous loyalty of the people? Can we suppose that the British government will lay aside all thoughts of Union, and cordially readopt a Regime, which fomenting civil discord and disaffection, and rendering Ireland the theatre of factious cabal, or stern and sullen despotism, must keep the empire vulnerable in a vital point,—and tempting the vigilant enemy to our shores, make this Country, instead of being a reservoir of Imperial force, an embarrassing drain to the resources, and a defalcation of the strength of Britain? No: such hopes it would be idle to entertain. Government, if frustrated for the present in its honest plan, would not enter into the views of those to whom I allude, but merely wait a more favourable moment, for accomplishing the prosperity of the Irish nation. This loyal class must therefore be content, in the alternative, either to further those intentions of Government, which I have described; or (since alone their party would be too small to make any head,) if they would resist, would form a junction with that party, to which they are now most unnaturally allied,—and cordially promote the wishes of a faction, whose desperate projects they look upon with dread; and whose political opinions they habitually abhor.

I conjure them to weigh all this maturely, before they persist in their opposition to a measure, so emphatically necessary at the present moment, to frustrate those attempts at separation, in resisting which I know they would be ready to shed their blood.

Let them discountenance that most unconstitutional and desperate experiment, of consulting, on a great political subject,—not the property, intelligence, or loyalty of the country,—but that giddy, wretched, and uninformed multitude, which, if it have any original and genuine sentiment at all, is averse from uniting with Great Britain—only because it would rather incorporate with France. Rejecting the authority of a clamorous and disaffected mob,—a *nata in vanos tumultus gens*,—which, composed chiefly perhaps of traitors, pardoned,—and unreclaimed,—is at once the dupe, and echo, of a few factious leaders,

{whose

(whose opinion it would be the shorter, and safer way—to ask directly,) let them prudently decline resorting to the assistance of that barbarous and lawless power, which having first aided in resisting a measure which they dislike, would end by overwhelming both them, and the Constitution.

Let them examine with generous shame, in the mirror which history holds up for their instruction, the disgraceful nature of that conduct, which some enemies to their honour would prevail with them to imitate.

They will find that, in Scotland, “the party who opposed Union, finding the majority in Parliament against them, studied to raise a storm without doors, to terrify them. *A set of addresses against the Union were sent round all the counties, in which those who opposed it had any interest.*”* There came up many of these, in the name of counties, and boroughs, and at last from parishes. This made some noise abroad; but was very little considered there, (in Parliament,) when it was known by whose arts and practices they were procured.”† They will find, I say, that near a century ago, expiring faction had recourse to such expedients; and will scorn to follow so vile and mischievous an example.

Thus much, at least, I expect with confidence from their loyalty. I only wonder they will not let me hope for more. I only lament that they will not co-operate with the government, to reconcile a connexion which they value, with a constitution which they love; and obtain these combined blessings for their country, by a Union. I have the honour to be,

S I R,

DUBLIN,
Feb. 10, 1800.

Your obedient and

very humble servant,

WILLIAM SMITH.

* A resemblance (say the metaphysicians) may sometimes be so close as to be rendered ludicrous by its exactness.

† The Historian adds that “when this appeared to have little effect, pains were taken to animate the rabble to violent attempts, both at Edinburgh and Glasgow.” See the Irish Letters missive, passim.

POSTSCRIPT.

THE foregoing Letter has, considering its length, been written with such expedition, that I flatter myself it will be thought entitled to some indulgence. An unwillingness to fatigue the reader, by the repetition of what had been already treated, ably by others, and diffusely by myself, induced me to omit many topicks, highly material, and pertinent to my enquiry. For example, however relevant the case of Scotland might be to the present question, I had little to add upon that subject, to what I had already given the Publick, in my printed Speech of the last Session; and could add nothing to what has since been urged by Mr. Redford, from p. 81 to 93 of his pamphlet. Mr. William Johnson, too, by his sound and constitutional work, had very much narrowed the circle of my investigation; and lastly, I was interrupted, and (fortunately perhaps for my reader,) hurried to an abrupt conclusion, by that lucid, and forcible statement of Lord Castlereagh, which was more convincing than a thousand arguments; and by the admirable speech, which I heard delivered by Doctor Duigenan, on the same occasion.

I do not feel it necessary to offer an excuse for submitting my thoughts on paper, (since at all) to the Publick. The topicks of Mr. Grattan's speech demanded a more full and accurate discussion, than it could have been permitted to receive, when he closed it,—at nine or ten o'clock in the morning; the House quite exhausted, and calling for the question.

A few words more, and I have done—

A Report has, I cannot conjecture how, stolen into general circulation, that in my Speech on Thursday morning last, I declared it to be my opinion, that if the Union could not otherwise succeed, it should be carried by military interference, and at the point of the bayonet.

I shall not demean myself so far as to disclaim sentiments, or expressions, alike foreign to my character, and unsuitable to the uniform tenor of my publick conduct: nor will I disparage a measure patronized by the sense and property of Ireland, by infinuating that towards promoting its success, recourse need be had to military interposition; but I shall plainly say that though many who may have circulated this rumour, are no otherwise to blame, than for having inadvertently propagated a flander upon hearst,—yet, (as I said nothing which, I think, could furnish a pretext for misconstruction,) it would perhaps be a stretch of candour to suppose that any man could, upon his own authority, charge me with having expressed the unconstitutional sentiment above mentioned, without being guilty of a scandalous, and intentional falsehood. A respect for Parliament, and regard for Truth and Decorum—make it right that I should add my firm persuasion, that no such person will be found amongst the Members of the Legislature.

FURTHER POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the first Edition of the foregoing Pamphlet was printed, two publications have appeared, purporting to be Reports of Speeches delivered in Parliament, by Mr. Saurin and Mr. Bushe.*

I shall make no apology for noticing them both. They relate to a question so easy to be solved, that at an early period I was myself induced to undertake its solution; I mean the competence of Parliament. And though I hoped, when in this Letter I resumed the discussion, to have at last "done with the subject for ever,"† yet I feel it due to the respectability of the two names which I have mentioned, and to the radical importance of the question itself, to recur to this beaten topick once again: especially when I recollect what I have observed in the first of the preceding pages, viz. that "no argument should remain untouched, no objection be left unanswered, which can throw light on a matter of such singular importance, as that which now engrosses the publick mind."

Mr. Bushe conceives the question, on the motion of Mr. Ponsonby, to be one, compounded of doctrine and of fact. The fact in dispute he states to be the sentiment of the Irish Nation; and describes the question of doctrine to be, whether the House of Commons should communicate this sentiment to the Sovereign, (supposing, for argument sake, it was ascertained) by the mode which Mr. Ponsonby proposed.

And first let me be indulged, while I say a word as to the *fact*. If by the publick be meant the mere population of this Country, I am disposed to concede, that so far as they have any definite opinion upon the subject, it is against a Union. But I shall never consent to impose upon the Irish House of Commons, the at once superfluous and indecent task, of not only conveying this sentiment to the Crown, but alledging it as a ground and motive for action. Whilst it stands recorded on our Statute Books and in our Journals, that Rebellion has raged destructively in Ireland, and still so rages, that the civil authority of the State is not able to preserve the peace of the Country, but that there is a necessity for continuing Military Law, will any Loyal Member of Parliament communicate to the Crown the fermentation of this rebellious mass, as the publick sentiment of the Land? The Sovereign needs not to be told, that the disaffection of Ireland is against a measure, which manifestly tends to the frustration of its views. I dare to say that not a man, of the thousands who escaped at Vinegar Hill, or massacred at Wexford, would hesitate to sign a petition against Union.

But why inform the Crown of what is notorious? His Majesty knows that all our Traitors are averse to Union: but the communication becomes worse than superfluous, if we urge their aversion as a reason against the measure. "Sire—the Rebels of Ireland disapprove mortally of Union; and therefore Parliament should

* The former in the Dublin Evening Post of Tuesday March 11; the latter in the Anti-union Evening Post of Saturday last, March 8, 1800. The speeches are stated to have been delivered on the Tuesday preceding.

† P. 45 of this pamphlet.

“ should abandon the measure.” This is not argument: it is sedition. If then, by “ the sentiment of the Irish Nation,” be meant the wishes of the United Irishmen, I do not scruple to consider their hostility to Union, as amongst the strongest arguments for its adoption.

If by the publick sentiment, be meant that which alone is deserving of attention,—the opinion of the intelligence and property of the country, I assert that this is favourable to Union. Let those who doubt on which side the intelligence of the country is enlisted, recal the speeches which they have heard, and the publications which they have read. Let them recollect on which side they have met with true statement, fair argument, and constitutional maxims; and where they have been put off with unfounded assertion, fallacious inference, subversive doctrines, and empty declamation. Let them recollect this, and then determine—which side of the question is espoused by the intelligence of Ireland.

As to the property,—I will affirm that a majority of it is favourable to the measure: that this majority is a vast one, if absentee property be included; and that it is a decided one, at all events. And here let me avow my opinion to be—that though the resident wealth may be entitled to superior influence, upon a question affecting the internal interests of the country in which the holders live, yet it is folly and injustice to deny, that the property of absentees should also be thrown into the scale, and be allowed considerable weight.

In support of this latter branch of my opinion, I would observe, first that the expediency or inexpediency of the measure now under discussion, depends on broad, obvious, and permanent principles, on which a man is scarcely the less qualified to decide, because this distracted country has not been the place of his abode: secondly, that it cannot be presumed that absentee proprietors would be favourable to the measure, unless they were persuaded that it tended to tranquillize the country, and render property secure; and thirdly, that if this be the effect of Union, it must be eminently beneficial.—I for my part should sooner listen to the testimony of one wealthy absentee proprietor, than to hundreds of those scrawling petitioners, who have no stake in the country, and whose disaffection has been sealed in the blood of their loyal fellow subjects;—yet whose signatures are now, with much parade, drawn up in array against the declared sense of Parliament.

But waving, for argument sake, the benefit of this doctrine, let us see how the resident property of Ireland inclines. I shall not refer my reader to that display of rank and wealth, which has appeared in print, in support of the measure: I shall direct his attention to that immense majority, which has declared in its favour, in that foyer of national landed interest, the House of Lords: a majority thus doubly entitled to attention; both as it evinces the sentiment of the property of this country,—and speaks the opinion of one independent branch of the Legislature: an opinion concurring with that, which the Royal Wisdom also entertains.—Look to the Anti-Union ranks in the House of Commons, and see whether some of their most splendid Members, do not derive their consequence from being expeditors of that property, whose present holders are strenuous advocates for Union.—See whether the vaunters of Anti-Union wealth, are not unfairly attempting to wield

wield against us the very property which is enrolled upon our side, and trample us with a portion of our proper strength.

Exclude the property which is in the hands of absentees, and you undoubtedly decrease the majority which is for Union; but itill leave a decided balance of sentiment in its favour. Admitting then, for a moment, the unconstitutional and pernicious doctrine, that the decrees of Parliament require any sanction from without doors,—what follows? that as an equal partition of publick sentiment would leave the legislature free, any leaning of external opinion should decide them. Or, to speak safer, and more constitutional language, as Parliament in deliberating on any publick question, shoudl weigh, as important *evidence*, the sentiment which prevails abroad, without so far abdicating its own sovereignty, as to submit to it as *law*,—any majority may suffice to corroborate their opinion, and add the desirable, but not indispensible testimony of the subject, to that of the Legislature, on the utility of the measure. Thus the case would stand on general principles; but when we add that Union is peculiarly the project, against which prejudice and ambition must stand formidably in array,—it becomes the more extraordinary, as well as fortunate, that the preponderance of public sentiment should be *at all* in its favour: the smallest majority should be held conclusive demonstration of its merits; and remove from the minds of any that were in suspense, the slightest shade of doubt as to the advantages of the measure.

Having thus disposed of the *question of fact*, by shewing that the disapprobation expressed by a misguided and seditious populace, affords a reason for adopting the plan which they disapprove,—and that if we listen only to those who, by having a stake of property, intelligence, experienced loyalty, and liberal cultivation, are competent to be heard, and deserving of attention, we shall find the weight of evidence in favour of Union,—having in short defined what is that publick sentiment to which, without danger or degradation, the Parliament may lend an ear,—and shewn how that sentiment is on the present question, I shall proceed, with my friend Mr. Bushe, to the *question of doctrine*, and enquire whether Parliament should communicate this sentiment to the Sovereign.—Undoubtedly they should; but not by the mode which Mr. Ponsonby has propofed.—Every bill which the Lords and Commons send up to Majesty for its royal assent, is a communication of the sentiment of the nation. Thus, and thus only, on a subject of legislation, can Parliament, by the principles of the Constitution, communicate the publick opinion to the Crown.

The subject has a right to petition every branch of the Legislature: the Commons against passing a bill: the Lords against concurring with it when past;—the Crown against giving the Royal assent to an a&l which has been carried through both branches of the Legislature. But the House of Commons demeans itself—when it condescends to transmit to that merely co-ordinate Legislative branch, the Crown, those petitions, which have been submitted to itself, and which itself is competent to grant, or to refuse.

Though

Though Mr. Bushe, in an early paragraph of his speech, denies the enquiry to be “whether the House of Commons should surrender its deliberative capacity to the people at large,”—yet in a subsequent part he seems to perceive, that when stripped of all disguises, this is in reality the question. He seems to perceive it, when he opens his investigation of “the point of doctrine,” by admitting that “the debate had *naturally resolved* itself into “a question of Parliamentary Competence.”—Yes, undoubtedly this was the question; and the only principle on which Mr. Ponsonby’s proposition could be agreed to, would be an insufficiency of authority in Parliament, to pass the measure without the express sanction of the people: a principle which at once overturns the balance of our Government, and having plundered the Parliament of supreme power, proceeds to lodge it with the people.

This question, as to the abstract competence of Parliament, which he confesses to form the substantial subject of discussion, Mr. Bushe declares to be one “on which he has not any doubts: “which, he never has debated, and never will debate;” and as, near the passage which I have cited, the context might lead to misconstruction, I am happy to have it in my power to explain what the certain conviction was, that Mr. Bushe intended to announce.—I am happy to know that he has no doubts of the abstract Competence of Parliament; and to be able thus to rescue a man, whom I regard, from the imputation of denying that, which cannot be disputed by any man, who understands the Law, and reveres the Constitution.

But at the same time that I gladly offer this testimony in favour of the political principles of my friend, he will be candid enough to pardon me, if I cannot refrain from blaming, as weak, unconstitutional, and pernicious, that impeachment of the competence of *this* particular Parliament, with which he qualifies his admission of the competence of Parliament in the abstract.

If the body, which now legislates for Ireland, be a Parliament, —it must be possessed of that political omnipotence, which adheres essentially and inseparably to its legislative capacity. He who admits unbounded competence to belong to Parliament in the abstract, must either recognise such competence in the present assembly, or deny that this assembly is a Parliament. But though Mr. Bushe’s doctrines are more than objectionable, he states them with the fairness and precision, which becomes a candid and manly character. He does “not infer the incompetence of this Parliament to pass this measure, from the magnitude of so vital a question,”—he deduces their incompetence, from the corrupt frame and construction of the Parliament itself. The broad principle on which he rears his conclusion of their incompetency, is not merely sufficient to disqualify them from concluding Union: it equally supports a denial of their authority to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act, or pass the Martial Law Bill;—and justifies the subject in resisting those encroachments on his freedom, made by this usurping, and impurely constituted Assembly.

I shall not desert the spirit, for the mere letter of my friend’s argument, or insult his understanding, or that of my other readers.—by supposing that he inferred the Incompetence of the present Parliament, not from what he knew himself to be its formation, but from what Lord Castlereagh asserted, and he denied—to

be the nature of its frame and constitution; and thus that his denial of its authority, was merely conditional and hypothetic. The whole tenor of Mr. Bushe's speech implies his adoption of the noble Lord's statement, in this respect; a statement, the accuracy and truth of which, no man of candour can indeed deny.

But I will ask wherein consists that disqualifying mal-formation, that cachexy, which deposes the present Assembly from legislative power, and by stripping it of a competence which is the inherent and characteristick privilege of Parliament, prostrates the happy contrivances of our mixed Government, at the feet of a wild and imperious democracy? Mr. Bushe will answer this question, by informing me that "the Constitution of the present Parliament is corrupt and venal: that it is a borough Representation, which requires to be purified."

But he will forgive me, if I enquire, whether when Judge Blackstone wrote his Commentaries, about the commencement of the present reign, and asserted the British Parliament to be absolute, all-competent and uncontrolled, the constitution of that House of Commons, to which he ascribed such boundless authority, was in no respect venal or corrupt? was in no degree a borough Representation? Such questions, if one may not answer, one may however ask without disrespect; and I call on Mr. Bushe, who is a lawyer, to reconcile that denial of the competence of our Parliament to pass a Union, which he grounds on the defects in its constitution,—with Sir Wm. Blackstone's assertion of the omnipotence of a similarly constituted Assembly.

If my very enlightened and sagacious friend disputes Lord Castlereagh's account of the present state of our Representation, he needs not to be reminded, that he cannot found a denial of the Competence of this Parliament, upon a statement which he refuses to admit as true. In the moment in which he controverts that statement, he must feel that he invests the present Legislature with all the Competence, which he has admitted to belong to Parliament in the abstract.

But if, on the other hand, he is of opinion that the present House of Commons* is constituted so corruptly, is so mere a borough Representation, that it should become an exception to the grand theory of our Constitution, and present us with the monstrous anomaly of a Legislature at once incompetent and supreme,—if this be the light in which he views the matter, I will ask of him, whether he must not necessarily, and on principle, be an advocate for radical Parliamentary Reform? Undoubtedly he must. He must feel, that without a supreme Legislative Authority, there can be no regular Government,—and will be impatient to submit to a thorough purification, that body which he has confessed to be too foul and loathsome, to be entrusted with the powers characteristic of its situation, but of which he would, on account of its unworthiness, divest it,—at the hazard of dissolving the Government, and giving entrance to all the violence of popular domination.

But I would also entreat my very ingenious friend to consider, whether the principle on which he has founded his argument against the Competence of the present Parliament, will not, besides leading

* Which he is so anxious to preserve unmodified.

leading him to promote schemes of reform, from which we have been used to shrink as the offspring of Jacobinism—oblige him to proceed farther, and embrace the doctrine of Mr. Paine, that a corrupt body is incompetent to reform itself. He never will suffer this mass of impurity, this assembly which he describes as corrupt, even to impotence,—to lay its polluted hands on the franchises of the country,—to meddle with that constituency with which it is not in fact connected,—and contaminate the free principles of the Constitution at their source. He will be uniform and consistent; and disclaiming the authority of a body so degraded, will call on the people at large to sweep away the abysse of the government, though by doing so he effaces the whole fabrick of our liberties, and swears allegiance to a despotic mob. In short, he will say of Reform, as he does of Union, that “it is a transaction which “ imperiously calls for that sanction of popular probation,” which yet is directly repugnant to the principles of our mixed government; “ and that no rational man can expect the plan to “ stand without it.”

Let my learned friend weigh these considerations maturely, (no man is better qualified to form a just estimate of their importance,) before he persists in his present reasoning, and, adopting the statement which he imputes to Lord Castlereagh, “ that Union is to “ operate as a parliamentary reform,” infers that “ this Parliament is incompetent to pass the measure.”

I shall not deny the statement to be judicious, which describes a proportion merely exceeding one half, as “ containing nearly two thirds of the County Representatives;”* nor compare the grounds on which some County Members are reported to rest their opposition to Union, viz. a sacrifice of their own judgment to the instructions, (resulting it may be from local prejudice) of their Constituents,—I shall not I say contrast these grounds with the maxims laid down by constitutional writers, that “ every member of the House of Commons, though chosen by one *particular* district, “ when elected and returned serves for the *whole* realm: for the end of his coming thither is not particular, but general; not barely to advantage *his* *Constituents*, but the *common-wealth*; and that therefore he is not bound to *consult with, or take the advice of his Constituents*, upon any particular point;”† neither shall I stop to inquire whether Messrs. Grattan, Geo. Ponsonby, Saurin, Bushe, Plunket, and others whom I could enumerate as distinguished opponents of Union, be County Members, or form part of that borough representation which is so contemned; nor detain my reader by examining whether, of the glorious hundred and twenty, (which is incessantly reckoned, as if it were feared that some of the precious flock might stray) a proportion of nearly five-sixths do not sit for boroughs. I might perhaps be warranted in doubting whether it be perfectly constitutional to scrutinize the ingredients of which a majority is composed, before we decide upon the validity of a bill which they have carried: whether, though the principles of the Constitution have set Knights and Burgesses exactly on a par, we are on every great occasion to sift the commons, and free the county representation from the borough chaff, before we determine how far a statute is entitled to our obedience?

* Mr. Bushe's Speech.

† Blackstone.

obedience: whether such a principle might not invalidate a long succession of laws, passed for aught we know by a mere borough majority, in that British Parliament, in which of the 558 Members, ~~not~~ more than about a third sit for counties and cities. I might enquire how many of us humble Burgesses are equivalent to the political weight and dimensions of a county Member. I will however do none of this; but shortly close my examination of Mr. Bushe's doctrines, by observing first upon that change in the proportion between the county and Borough Representation, which a Legislative Union will introduce; and secondly, upon that measure of compensation, against which so great a clamour has been raised.

And first as to the predominance of county Members in the United Parliament. There is a want of candour, or of judgment, in inferring from such a change of proportion, that the Minister who proposes it, by doing so, admits the Representation which is to perish, to be incurably unsound.—See how the case stands. Towards accomplishing a Union, it is requisite that the Representation of Ireland should be so abridged, as to render it commensurate to the population and resources of this country, become (in consequence of that measure) a fraction of the United Kingdom. The question then is, what description of Representatives we should preserve: a question, which, by reference to obvious principles, can be solved; since it is plain that in such new situation, the same comparison between different classes of Representation, may become expedient, which under other circumstances would be highly unconstitutional and improper. Such a change of proportion merely determines what common sense had previously decided, that since only a part of our commons can be retained, that which is drawn from counties, and commercial towns should be preferred: but the alteration is far from implying the subversive doctrine, which some would extract from it, viz. that a Parliament in which Borough Members predominate, is on this account incurably unsound; and incapacitated from exercising those legislative functions, which, if otherwise constituted, it would be competent to perform. This preference of County Members to the Representatives of boroughs,—a preference justifiable on general principles,—is perhaps peculiarly adapted to the situation of this country, peculiarly fit to be acted on in Ireland, when a change of political circumstances obliges us to select from amongst our Commons, the class which we should send to the Imperial Legislature. But when Mr. Bushe represents “the most open of the boroughs,” as preferred in this arrangement, on the score of their constitution, though this statement must be confessed to be the most favourable to his denial of the competence of this (according to him isolated) Parliament,—yet in other respects it is liable to objection. That the most open of the boroughs will be those which return Burgesses to the common Legislature, may eventually be the case: but it should at the same time be recollected, that the nature of their charter will not be the ground of such selection; and that the Minister, in settling the mode of representation, so far from acting on a principle which proclaims that, from which Mr. Bushe infers the incompetence of the present Parliament, has on the contrary taken a circum-

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spect and cautious line, and wisely refrained from establishing a precedent, which might lead to wild and jacobinical Reform.

In eloquence, I admit myself far inferior to Mr. Bushe; and perhaps am even overweening, when I calculate that in point of judgment, we are more nearly on a par: but, in integrity I must confidently claim to be his equal.

Having premised this—let me declare that the idea of compensation, which so outrages his feelings, does not shock my delicacy in the slightest degree.

What does the very term *compensation* imply? The surrender of an equivalent, by the person thus compensated. Is it not then an abuse of language, and of common sense, to alledge that men are bribed, when, in return for that of which they have been deprived, they receive merely its value, and nothing more?

Sentiments of decorum, and respect, may forbid our professing to give entire credit to those rumours, which represent seats in Parliament as private property,—grown, by long connivance, into objects of venal transfer. But if, conquering these reverent scruples, we hearken to the report in any degree, we ought to take the whole of it impartially together; and enquire what is the accustomed price of that, which is thus stated to be bought and sold. Those who institute this enquiry, may be led to conclude—that the borough proprietor who receives fifteen thousand pounds from the Legislature, for the surrender of those privileges, of which he is tenant by sufferance, and prescription,—gains absolutely nothing by the exchange. They may be induced to pronounce, that he receives no more than the current price of that influence, for which, if the Government was not disposed to buy, he could, (under the operation of inveterate abuse) without any difficulty, find purchasers elsewhere.—They may be consequently led to deny, that he can be unduly influenced by an arrangement, which no more than literally compensates him for that saleable hereditament, which for the publick benefit, is wrested from his hands.—They may be led to deny, that looking at the transaction with mere reference to him, and in a strictly pecuniary point of view, he is placed by Union in a better situation, than that in which he stood before. Finally, all who investigate the question thus candidly and coolly, will observe that it is the general principle of *compensation*, which is now under discussion, and against which so groundless an outcry has been raised; and will feel that those who object to fifteen thousand pounds as overpayment, are in fact admitting this principle, and merely higgling about the price.

But, by a confusion, which I am far from supposing to be inadvertent, those charges of bias, which are extracted from the principle of compensation, after having been very unjustly cast upon the borough proprietor, are by a grosser perversion, indiscriminately thrown on an entire class, of whom many have no concern, or privity in the transaction; I mean the borough Representatives.

Let me therefore, for the purpose of illustration, suggest an hypothetic, and ideal case. Let me suppose that my colleague, Mr. Bushe, and I—sat by purchase, for a venal borough. What community of interest would there be between us, and the proprietor from whom we bought? Or how could our votes be influenced, by the compensation which he received? Should we not be left unbiased.

bias'd by that proposal,—which yet is objected to on no other ground, than that of its influencing the conduct of members of Parliament? Would not this be the case, though we were, both the one and the other, as corrupt as the foulest slanderer could chuse to represent us? And could any man be surprised if that occurred, which as things stand, has actually happened,—viz. that we should take opposite sides on the question of Union,—though returned by the same patron, for his venal borough?

This Patron's estate, if any he had, would be reverisionary: postponed, and subject to our term of seven years: and if the proposed compensation were what it is untruly called—a scheme of bribery, intended to procure votes for Union,—the plan would be as lame and inadequate, as it was corrupt,—so long as those Commoners who purchased seats, were not allowed their distributive portion of this state largess.

Persons returned by borough Patrons, not for money, but gratuitously, and from motives of confidence and affection, I admit to stand on different grounds. I admit a connexion between them, and those proprietors whose seats they fill. But in shewing that compensation is no bribe, I have proved that the transaction which was not calculated immediately to sway the patron, could not operate immediately to bias the representative: a representative, by the way, connected with this patron by merely honourable ties; and therefore whose scrupulous regard to these, should acquit him of yielding to any influence that was corrupt or base: even supposing that, (of which the contrary is the truth,) viz. that the proprietors title to compensation would be in any way affected, by the part which he, or those Members whom he could influence, might chuse to take on the question of Union.

But to return from this view of the situation of others, to our consideration of his case, who is the object of compensation. The arguments of those who object to this measure, rest on the corruption of the borough patron, as their basis: if you suppose him incorruptible, their foundation fails; and all their specious reasoning tumbles to the ground. Examining the question then upon their own hypothesis, and assuming dishonesty in the proprietors of boroughs as our datum, I beg to know whether, if compensation were refused, the present Parliament might not be considered as one packed against an Union? one bribed in general to oppose every measure, which clashed with the private interests of those borough proprietors, whose legislative influence is so operative and extensive? If this be so, how stands the dilemma? Either borough patrons are incorruptible, or, they are not: if they be, we may dismiss our fears of the influencing and controlling effects of compensation: if they be not,—we should make the Members of Parliament as *indifferent*, as the law requires every juror to be, before we call on this grand inquest to give their verdict, on a question which involves the publick weal. And how are we to accomplish this? Since it is not in our power to annul those interests, which may operate to produce an undue influence against Union, we must only contrive to check and balance them by contrary advantages—which shall create an equivalent bias on the opposite side,—and eventually leave the Parliament *unpartial*.

It is a known maxim of our law, that the testimony of an interested witness shall in no case be received; and I have heard determinations, grounded on this principle, which it may not be unillustrative to state. I have known preliminary questions proposed to a witness, his answers to which having demonstrated a positive interest, the Court has been for rejecting him as incompetent; but when subsequent interrogatories have shewn, not that this interest did not exist on one side, but that it was *compensated* and countervailed by an influence operating in the contrary direction, his testimony has been admitted, as disinterested and impartial. The application of such decisions to the question before us, I think obvious.

We may undoubtedly lament the prevalence of a practice, so repugnant to the theory of our Government, in its representative branch, as that of vending the privilege of legislation,—and suffering a personal and private interest to grow up in Parliament, which may happen to encounter, and obstruct the publick weal.

But the question is not as to the nature or effect,—but merely as to the existence of this abuse. If any man think it merely a theoretick evil,—of which the mischief vanishes in practice,—I will concede him all the benefits of his doctrine; and only require in return, that he be consistent,—and patiently abide the consequences of his own system: that he desist from disparaging that class of our Representation, whose share in legislating—he refuses to consider as a practical abuse: that he cease to compliment the County Members at our expence; and to analyse a Parliamentary Majority into its component parts, before he pronounces the measure which it has carried—to be a valid one.

But if the mischief be not an imaginary, but a real one, I would ask the clamorous enemies of compensation, whether they wish to perpetuate a substantial evil,—or, in removing it, to invade the property of individuals, whose interest in boroughs is as prescriptive,—as it is perhaps irreconcileable with the genuine principles of our Constitution?

In truth the Anti-Unionists must excuse me, if I repeat what I have had occasion to observe before,—that inconsistency is the grand characteristick of their party. Thus, according as it suits their transitory purpose, boroughs are private property, or they are not. If a Member, who is supposed to sit by purchase for a venal borough, declares an opinion in favour of Union, he is reminded of the injurious effect which that measure will have on the interests of the proprietor, by whom he has been returned: it is suggested to him that his seat is but a particular estate, carved out of the political inheritance of the borough; and that, subject to his own seven years term, he is a mere trustee for the reversion: and upon these grounds he is modestly conjured, by the scrupulous and patriotick Anti-union band, to postpone the welfare of the publick, to the interests of the patron.

But let Unionists admit the principle on which these patriots have thus insisted,—let them admit a property in boroughs to have grown out of immemorial acquiescence,—and their opponents are instantly in arms. Yet what, in truth, is the only difference between them? The principle is admitted both by Government and Opposition; but while the latter would sacrifice to it, no less a victim than the common-weal,—the former proposes to reconcile publick advantage

advantage with private interest; and without injuring the individual, to give prosperity to the Nation.

To secure private property, is indeed one of the most indelible, and sacred duties of every State. Its security, if Mr. Locke,—and other eminent writers do not err,—was emphatically the object for which society itself was framed; and therefore Governments conform laudably to the ends of their institution, when they protect even the property which had its remote origin in wrong; and defend not only what they have expressly guaranteed, but even what they have tacitly endured: so far forth as they are able to bestow this latter protection, without the sacrifice of paramount, and more essential duties.

But who can listen patiently, when the measure of compensation is described as a purchasing of the liberties of the people? Can the practice (if it subsists) of an individual patron, to sell the privilege of sitting in Parliament, be enumerated amongst the rights of the constituent body of the Nation? Is not the abrogation of such a practice, on the terms of compensating the Usurper, rather the purchase of an old encroachment on the franchises of the people? an inveterate impediment to the exercise of those rights which they should enjoy?

If such contradictions can be detected, between the theory and practice of our Representation, whatever comfort I may derive from doubting whether the evil be not less real than apparent,—(less practically than theoretically repugnant to the publick freedom,) I yet cannot look with unconcern on blemishes, which so deform the Government under which we live: still less can I approve, or justify their conduct, who for the purpose of carrying a mere party end, indulge in those unmeaning common places of declamation, which seduce the vulgar by the same qualities that disgust the man of sense, and thus impair the already too frail allegiance of the subject, by a profane and pitiless exposure of the defects of our Constitution.

I therefore regret the necessity which has been imposed upon me, of discussing topicks which it were better keep in the shade. The wise and loyal man, in these days of jacobinism and subversion, merely probes the fault sufficiently to prescribe, and apply the remedy; lest by any incautious, or superfluous exposure, instead of curing the diseased part, he might destroy the Constitution.

It is on this account that I feel satisfaction in recollecting, and re-urging, that the inquiry is not as to the positive, but merely as to the relative excellence of our borough Representation. The question is not whether it is so unsound, as that it ought to be abolished, or radically reformed; but merely whether, under that political change of circumstances, which involves an abridgment of the numbers of our Representatives, we should give the preference to Boroughs or to Counties: a question which can be answered in but one way by the Anti-unionist, who scorns even to tell the Borough Members who oppose him, but adopting the fastidious sentiment of the Roman Actress,—exclaims

Satis est Equitem mibi plaudere:

“I will not listen to the opinion of any, but Knights of the Shire.”
Agreeably

Agreeably to the intention which I announced at the commencement of this Postscript, I shall now proceed to animadvert upon the speech of Mr. Saurin;* examining its topicks, not exactly in the order in which they occur,—but disposing first of those which strike me as preliminary and of lesser moment; and reserving for the last, my discussion of those doctrines, which are rendered important—not by their truth, but by their danger.

The example of the Revolution appears to this learned gentleman, to be in no degree relevant to the question of competence, in the present Parliament, to pass a Union; “inasmuch as the “proceedings of the Legislature of that time had the full assent “of the people at large.”† I deny the fact; and refer to history in support of my denial. I deny such full assent to have been had in England; and so far was Scotland from concurring in all the material points of that arrangement, that a separation of the Crowns was soon after threatened, in the reign of Anne; about which period, not Revolution principles, but Toryism—appears to have been the prevailing disposition of the English people. And, lastly, with regard to the publick sentiment of Ireland, I shall only observe, that the full assent of the Irish People to the Revolution, was not unequivocally attested by any thing which passed at Limerick, at Aughrim, or at the Boyne. Thus hazardous and unsettling, do we find the Doctrines, which affect to rest the validity of publick acts on any other ground, than the strict and recognised principles of the constitution. Thus dangerous is it to follow the counsels of Mr. Saurin; and instead of taking the publick opinion from its only legitimate source,—the acts of the legislature,—to collect, with him, a spurious sentiment without doors, and set up this in opposition, and contrast to the sense of Parliament.

The precedent of that Union, which occurred early in the present century, he considers as alike inapplicable to the question now before us; and asks his hearers what analogy there can be found between the past Scottish, and intended Irish incorporation? What resemblance between the case of Scotland in those days,—and that of Ireland at the present time? In my mind a resemblance of even singular exactness. The end proposed by the measure now in progress, is the same with that which was sought by the arrangement of 1707. It was intended then, as it is endeavoured now, to secure the fragile and assailed connexion of two neighbouring countries, imperfectly united under one common head: Countries inhabited by people speaking the same language, formed to similar habits, and whose harmony was as mutually salutary, as it was precarious: Countries of which one, inferior to the other in power and resources, sought to strengthen itself by the aid of France, the common enemy of both. He who cannot discover even a close and striking likeness between the situation of Scotland in 1707, and Ireland in 1800, must, to my judgment, be very dull, or extremely uninformed. I had myself occasion, in the last year, to point out some circumstances of resemblance: but the similarity has been demonstrated more strictly and completely, in the present session of Parliament, by Mr. Ormsby, when he read and commented on the message of Queen Anne.

I shall

* As published in the Dublin Evening Post of March 11th ult. † Ib.

I shall not therefore dwell longer on this subject ; but proceed without further delay to the consideration of those maxims, which I consider as most pernicious, in the publication that I am discussing.

Mr. Saurin appears to have opened his speech by enquiring—upon what authority Lord Castlereagh had pronounced that the petitions on our table, should be “ treated with inattention and contempt ? ” In the first place, this question imputes to the Minister a declaration which he never made ; and indeed the charge is contradicted by what Mr. Saurin has, in another part of his speech, laid down as the doctrine promulgated by Lord Castlereagh.

The passage which I allude to, is as follows—“ The noble Lord says the petitions are entitled to respect, and ought to be “ attended to by the House ; but should not govern the decision “ of Parliament : ” he says “ that Parliament is not *bound* to act “ agreeably to those petitions ; but, in determining, is to take its “ own wisdom for its guide.”*

Now to me this appears a very liberal admission of the weight to which petitions to Parliament are entitled : an admission as ample as the Minister could make, consistently with a reservation to the Legislature, of that supreme authority which, (as a fine *quâ non*,) all constitutional writers have assigned it ; and which being wanted, it would present us with the practical bulk, of a Legislature without the power of legislation.

But if what Mr. Saurin means to ask be this,—on what authority we dispute the title of those petitions on which he relies, to peculiar respect or attention from the Legislature,—I will refer him, by way of answer, to the signature of Mr. Black ; who addresses Parliament on behalf of himself and those retainers in arms, whom he represents as ready to back their request by force, and unequivocally attest their enmity, not to Union, but to Connexion. More expert in the exercise of the pike, than of the pen, these gallant Anti-unionists reserve their exertions for the field ; and depute the more inglorious task of signature to their foreman, Mr. Black. The above very conspicuous feature in these terrific supplications is one, by the way, to which I am surprised at Mr. Saurin’s not having adverted ; inasmuch as, before he spoke, our attention had been directed to it, by the Solicitor General ; who, at the same time, paid due tribute to the loyalty and decorum of these credentials, presented to Parliament by the Envoy of Treason, Mr. Black.

In truth, Mr. Saurin has himself assigned some reasons, why these scrolls, (whose prolixity we have seen unfolded, with so much of political haberdashery, and stage trick,) should not influence, too conclusively, the decision of the Legislature.

He has assured us that those, whose names, in virtue of their forty shilling stake, have been signed to this muster-roll of faction, are perhaps not even “ capable of enquiring into the political “ character, or fitness, of the candidate ” whom they return ; though, like Sancho, they feel marvellously competent to the government of an island.

Mr.

* Mr. Saurin’s Speech.

Mr. Saurin, by this assurance, goes further than Montesquieu himself had done. The principle which he laid down, was merely this, that the people at large are quite incapable of discussing affairs of state; and should therefore possess no political power, beyond that which consists in their right of electing Representatives: Representatives whom he would not make accountable for their parliamentary conduct, to the electors who had returned them; because this would be contradictory to the maxim which he had laid down, that the multitude is unqualified for deliberating on political questions.

But that profound writer held the constituent body of the people as discerning enough, to form a just opinion "of the fitness of the "candidate" who sought to represent them. It remained for Mr. Saurin to degrade them further; and, by a novel mode of argument to alledge the incapacity which he heaps upon them, as a reason for paying implicit obedience to their caprice,—and deferring to whatever doctrines their whim may tempt them to lay down, on matters which Montesquieu thought them incompetent to discuss.

"The weight of the petitions is to be ascertained by the first "names to them;" for, as to "the great numbers who signed, "nothing but the influence" of these eminent names "could have "procured so many signatures."*

Be it so. Let us consider these *great numbers* as mere retinue of the first subscribers: the *Gyases* and *Cloanthuses*, who but serve to fill up gaps in this political epic: a sort of *etcetera*, who proclaim the pomp and authority of their leaders.

But while we admit the justice of this statement, let us, for that very reason, cease to rely on numbers so enrolled. Let us hear these great men justify, as they can, what we conceive to be resistance to the peace and welfare of their distracted Country;—but let us reject the testimony of their shabby compurgators: let us disregard the response and echo, which is reverberated from a throng of names, to the encouraging cry of certain political conductors;—and not pay too much heed to that anxiety for the preservation of their *independence*, which is expressed by those, whom Mr. Saurin has described to be no better than a herd of creatures and *dependents*.

Thus the case would stand,—thus weak would be the pretensions to respect, which those petitions could bring on the score of numbers,—though we should merely abide by, and draw our inference from, the statement of Mr. Saurin: though we should forget that the state of Ireland supplies additional grounds for lifting distrustfully to petitions thus numerously subscribed: though we should forget that the numbers must be swelled, and almost constituted, by those who may be described as "ex omni collu- "vione mixti, exsules, capitalia ausi plerique; quos, velut ma- "teriam novandis rebus, nunc primum nova pace coalescente, "ex variis causis fortuna similis conglobaverat.†

These are the persons, whose prayers we are called upon, not to grant—but to obey. The greater portion of them yield but seemingly to the influence of their superiors, while in reality they are seeking to promote their own rebellious ends; and those loyal men who become the advocates and patrons of such a class—are but

* Mr. Saurin's Speech.

† Livy.

but reviving the extravagance of the Knight of la Mancha, and unchaining malefactors, who will use their freedom to the injury of their Redressers.

But let me now proceed, more directly, to reprehend that most dangerous and unconstitutional doctrine, which Mr. Saurin's positions all go to establish: I mean that denial of the competence of Parliament to pass Union, which can only be supported on the general principle of their legislative incompetence: a principle as mischievous and absurd, as it is broad.

This doctrine, (to the pernicious tendencies of which, my respect for Mr. Saurin makes me suppose him blind,) he has introduced under those various forms and disguises, in which his ingenuity enabled him to dress it. First, it made its approach in the shape of apprehension that the people might not submit to the measure; thus provoking the resistance, which it seemed to deprecate. It next assumed the form of that exorbitant respect for the petitions of the people, which went to exalt these, from the character of subjects to that of sovereigns, and gave to their prayers that controlling efficacy, of which it stripped the statute law of the land. Thirdly, it came forward as a motion to dissolve the Parliament; and at length (when this Postscript had gone to press,) .

“ Scindit se nubes, et in aethera purgat apertum:”

the doctrine bursts from its concealment, with decided and terrific aspect; divulging all its danger and deformity to the publick.*

On the first form of this Proteus mischief, I shall not comment. Suffice it to say that the argument, as applied to the people, is excitement,—and as addressed to the Government, is intimidation. The former can only attest its persuasiveness by committing treason: the latter can only answer it by precautions, or with contempt.

On the second shape which this wild theory has taken,—that of unconstitutional deference to the petitions of the subject,—I have already dwelt with some attention; and shall add little to what I have said, except to shew that I have not misinterpreted, or mistated my opponent.

I will ascribe nothing to Mr. Saurin. He shall speak for himself: shall (to prevent mistakes) repeat his own profession of political faith.

“ The noble Lord says, the right of the subject to petition Parliament, cannot be denied. Petitions, according to his Lordship, are entitled to respect; and ought to be attended to by the House.”†

Such are the (in my judgment very constitutional) opinions, as to the weight which petitions should have with Parliament, ascribed to my Lord Castlereagh, by Mr. Saurin himself; but which this latter objects to, as derogatory from the just and proper efficacy of such petitions,—because his Lordship has proceeded to prescribe

* See a Report of Mr. Saurin's Speech of March 13, 1800, published in the Anti-union and Dublin Evening Post of Saturday, March 15th, 1800.

† Mr. Saurin's Speech on Tuesday, March 4, published in the Dublin Evening Post of March 11.

prescribe some limits to their authority. His objections are to be found in the following extract from his speech.

“ But the noble Lord says, that Parliament is not *bound* to act “ agreeably to those petitions: they should not *govern* their de- “ cision. For Mr. Saurin’s part, he was at a loss to know of “ what use it was to the people to have a right to petition, if “ the Parliament were justified in acting on their *private opinion*, “ in opposition. It was a mockery of the Nation, to tell them “ they had a right to lay their opinion before Parliament, but “ that Parliament also had a right to act as they pleased, notwith- “ standing the sense of the Nation, expressed the other way.”

“ But the noble Lord says, the people, who have signed these “ petitions, cannot have weighed the question with deliberation; “ and were not capable of judging of it, even if they had.” “ It was “ not necessary” (Mr. Saurin said,) “ that they should be capable. “ The nature of a petition proved it. A petition urged no *reasons*: “ it merely stated the *will* of the petitioners. Therefore, when “ the right of the subject to petition was acknowledged, it was “ acknowledged that they had a right to state to the Parliament, “ what was the publick will; without shewing the reasons by “ which that will was guided, or whether it was founded on any “ *reasons*; and if the right of petition was not *nugatory*, and a “ mockery of the Nation, the Parliament was *bound* to act agree- “ ably to what the will of the Nation was;—when plainly and un- “ equivocally expressed.”*

I shall not dwell upon the very extraordinary language, which calls the sense of that Legislature, which is the only constitutional organ, that *obligatorily* speaks the publick will—which calls this, I say, the *private opinion* of Parliament: I shall not stop to translate into Latin (Lucan has already done it for me,†) that Jacobinick maxim, which, reminding us that petitions urge no *reasons*, but merely state the will of the petitioners, concludes mischievously, and absurdly, that the Legislature is *bound* to act agreeably to this will, “ whether it be founded on any *reasons*,” or be utterly irrational.—I shall not ask whether the right of laying your evidence before a court, be *nugatory*,—unless, usurping the functions of the judge, you determine your own cause. I shall not detain my Reader, by enquiring whether it be not of the essence of a supplication—that it be susceptible of rejection; or whether a mandatory petition be not a contradiction in terms. I shall merely remind him that I appear not to have misconstrued Mr. Saurin, by representing his obsequious respect for the petitions of the people, as a mere formula, in which he denies the competence of Parliament. I shall only observe, that if petitions should *control*, then Parliament is not *uncontrollable*; which all constitutional writers have described it to be. Wherever the right lies, of effectively promulgating the national will, there also the legislative power resides; and if Mr. Saurin’s theory be true, that petitions are bills, brought in by the multitude, (without any leave,) and which the instrumental Parliament is bound to carry into law,—then our Government is no more a mixed one, than was that of Athens: for it matters not whether

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the

* Mr. Saurin’s Speech.

† Hoc volo: hoc jubeo: stat, *pro ratione, voluntas.*

the law goes by the name of *statute*, or of *petition*,—the law-giver must ever be the supreme power in the State.

In fact, my learned opponent breaks from his concealment, when interrupting his devotions to the petitioning Idol that he has set up, he apparently, (but not really) *digresses* to the Scotch Union; and affirms that if it were carried by the Parliament of Scotland, against the sense of the people, these latter would have been justified in resisting.

This position, of Mr. Saurin, contradicts in terms the constitutional principle, that Parliament shall, exclusively and paramountly, express the legislative sense of the Nation. It at once transfers the sovereign power, from the three estates of the realm, to the people in mass; and, coupled with his assumption, that the sense of the people of Ireland is against the measure of Union, it unequivocally preaches, and authorizes revolt.

I shall make no farther comment on this doctrine of Mr. Saurin, than by enquiring whether he conceives the Insurrection, or Martial-Law Bills, or the Act suspending the Habeas Corpus Law, to have been carried with, or against the sense of the great body of the Irish Nation? And if contrary to their opinion, whether the people acquired a right of resistance to those measures? I shall merely ask him whether, when the Irish House of Commons in 1795, rejecting the numerous petitions which crowded their table, refused to enact what was termed Catholic emancipation, a right accrued to *the majority of the people*, of revolting against the disrespect, with which Parliament presumed to treat that publick sentiment, which those petitions had “expressed, so unequivocally, and plainly.”*

The next form, into which Mr. Saurin’s principle of Parliamentary incompetence—transmigrates, is that of a motion for addressing the Crown to dissolve the Parliament.†

It is, undoubtedly, the Royal privilege, to terminate the existence of Parliament, at pleasure: but to exercise this prerogative at the present moment, would be to abuse it; and in calling on his Majesty to exert it, the House of Commons would abjectly travel out of its proper province, in order to degrade, and stultify itself.

No solid reason can be alledged for dissolving the present Parliament, except such serious faults in its frame and constitution, as may render it, on momentous questions, an inadequate representative of the people; and incompetent (for example) to pass so vital a measure, as that of Union. But how is this evil remedied by dissolution,—if after the present Parliament has been dissolved, it is replaced by another, elected on the same objectionable principles? alike imperfectly connected with the people? If he wished to attain the object, at which his motion professed to aim, Sir John Parnell should have prefaced it, by bringing in a bill, for the radical reform of the House of Commons; and if he be not prepared, (as I apprehend he is not) to do this, his project of dissolution must be unsupportable, and ineffacious.

Those who describe the dissolution of the present Parliament, as an appeal to the succeeding one, I consider as talking idly, The

* Mr. Saurin’s Speech.

† Moved by Sir John Parnell, and supported by Mr. Saurin.

The present is as high a Court, as any future Parliament will be; and there can be no appeal, but from a subordinate, to a superior Tribunal.

No; it is an appeal to the Jacobin feelings, and temporary delusion of the populace. I have heard of an appeal from the drunkenness, to the sobriety of Philip; but the present is a reversal of that proceeding. It is an appeal from the sobriety of Parliament, to the wild intoxication of the people.

To whom would Mr. Saurin refer the investigation of this most important matter of State? Whom would he call upon, to substitute, (by the exercise of their elective franchise,) a Legislature more capable than the present, of discussing the Union question? He addresses himself to those, whom the Constitution has pronounced incapable of deliberating on publick affairs; and is anxious that the present Parliament should make room for one, returned in a principal degree by that class of men, whose capacity to judge "of the political character, or fitness of the candidate," that seeks to represent them,* he more than doubts; and very nearly denies.

On the very night, on which the motion for dissolving Parliament was made, the Bill for reviving Martial Law passed. What a comment does this furnish, on the tendency of that motion! What a picture can the imagination form, of publick inflammation augmented by the tumult of general election! of the sheriff sitting in one court, to collect the suffrages of electors, and the military inquest in an adjoining one, to inflict punishment on traitors! Of the constituent, escorted from the hustings, where he gave his vote, to the tribunal under whose sentence he is to expiate his treasons!—Would a Parliament thus constituted be hostile to Union? It is to be feared that it might even be friendly to Separation.

Having now got through the four first acts of Mr. Saurin's tragedy, (for tragical indeed its effect must be,) of the incompetence of Parliament to pass a Union,—having shewn that his analysis of the revolution, and Scotch Union,—his apprehensions of resistance to the measure, if enacted,—his passive obedience to the petitions of the people,†—and his proposal to send the populace to new elections,—are all mere complications in that plot, of which the Incompetence of Parliament is the denouement,—let me now

* See a passage already cited from Mr. Saurin's Speech.

† "Those great men who governed the councils of Queen Anne, had put down the flabby doctrines of passive obedience: they had no notion of the doctrines which he was sorry to see now revived." (Mr. Saurin's Speech of March 23rd) This doctrine of passive obedience Mr. Saurin is far from proposing to abolish: on the contrary, he holds Parliament to be implicitly bound to follow the plainly expressed, (however irrational) will of the people without doors. He would leave the flabby doctrine of passive obedience in full force; and only wishes to change the object of servility. The multitude is the tyrant, whose chains he desires to wear. Aristotle has somewhere said that there exists a strange and close resemblance between tyrannies and democracies. Both forms of Government he considers as despotic. Mr. Saurin's Speeches furnish a reading on these principles of Aristotle.

now make a few observations upon this. Denouement, indeed, it may be called; since it directly unties the principles which compose regular Government, and hold the members of the state together.

" Those great men who assisted in the Revolution of 1688, had " declared that the King held his crown by compact with the people; " and that when the Crown violated that compact, by attempting " to subvert the Constitution, the Crown was forfeited," by the attempt. " He, (Mr. Saurin) would reassert the doctrine of the " glorious Revolution, and boldly declare that when the Sovereign" (that is to say the supreme legislative*) " power violated that " compact, that moment the right of resisting accrued."

Before I proceed to extract that part of Mr. Saurin's speech,† in which the chief and deadliest political venom seems to me to reside, I would digress shortly, to observe that this learned gentleman appears to mistake the principles, and maxims of the Revolution. The contrivers of that great transaction were not resisting the sovereign legislative power of the State: they were, *on behalf of the Legislature*, and in support of the laws, opposing those unwarrantable encroachments of the Executive, which, if not checked, would have produced effects similar to those, to which Mr. Saurin's doctrines lead; by deposing the Legislature, and annihilating the Constitution. King James usurped, in favour of the prerogative of the Crown: Mr. Saurin makes his encroachments, for the aggrandizement of the mob. But the doctrines of both alike transgress the just boundaries of the Constitution: both make illegal inroads on the supreme authority of the State: both seek to supersede the legitimate powers of Parliament.

The principles established in 1688, are best ascertained by a reference to the abuses, which they were intended to encounter. If any thing so unlikely should occur, (but mean time this event ought not to be foreboded,) as an invasion of the liberties of the British subject, by that Legislature, of which one co-ordinate, independent branch is popular, the deplorable right of revolt may accrue to an injured people. But it will flow to them from no principle established at the Revolution: it will be derived to them from the violated rights of Human Nature.

To return to the doctrines of Mr. Saurin. He thus proceeds:— " But surely, if there be a right in the Nation, to resist an unconstitutional† assumption of power, there could not occur a stronger case for the exercise of it, than this measure would afford, if carried against the will of the majority of the Nation." He asserted " that the petitions on our table proved that the great body of the people of Ireland was against the measure;" that it was a " measure, which the people of Ireland almost unanimously disliked; and that, " if a Legislative Union should be so forced upon this Country, against the will of its inhabitants, " it

* The context of Mr. Saurin's Speech shews that Parliament is the power, of which he speaks.

† Of the 13th of March.

‡ " An Act of Parliament can never be unconstitutional, in the proper acceptation of the term." Paley.

" it would be a *nullity*; and resistance to it would be a *struggle* " against *usurpation*, and not a *resistance* against *law*.*

Such are the principles laid down as constitutional, by his Majesty's first Council, learned in the law of Ireland. To prevent mistake, I have stated them in his own words; and the remaining comments which I mean to offer, will be few and short; inasmuch as the doctrines which I have to observe upon, are too explicitly avowed, and in my mind replete with danger too apparent, to stand much in need of explanation.

It is true, that Mr. Saurin admits it to be disputed, whether our people be for, or against the measure. But he makes this admission for (what my respect for him forbids me to call) the insidious purpose, of resorting to a most objectionable, and fallacious criterion of the fact: for the purpose of inducing Government to dissolve the present Parliament, and thus to supply the fuel of a general election, to the ill smothered, and already flaming turbulence of the Country: thus endeavour to infect the Legislature with that disloyalty, which is epidemic without doors; and procure (I trust the attempt might prove a fruitless one) a House of Commons, which should be the quintessence of jacobinism and disaffection.

But though he admits the dislike of the great body of our people to Union, to be a fact, which others controvert,—Mr. Saurin professes to be himself convinced of their aversion. In his opinion, the mass of our population is against the measure: and therefore he is not stating possible and imaginary circumstances, as the mere foundations of an hypothesis: he is not putting an ideal, but as he conceives, a real case, (the actual case and circumstances of Ireland, at this moment,) when he declares that if an Union pass through Parliament, contrary to the sense of a majority without doors, the measure may be legally encountered with resistance.

A Member of Parliament is undoubtedly entitled to urge, in the strongest terms, the impolicy of a measure which is yet in progress,—and has not been enacted into law. But he, to my judgment, abuses and perverts this privilege, who tells the people that if the law pass, and they disrelish it, they may resist it. In this case, if Mr. Saurin be right as to the publick sentiment, his *if* is a very temporary, and transient *peacemaker*; which the Royal assent, once given to the measure, will do away. His Majesty's assent to Union will supply a minor premise to the learned gentleman's hypothetic syllogism; and convert his *conditional*, into an *absolute encouragement* of treason.

Therefore, in order to evade the effects of a principle so full of insecurity, and danger,—one which interposes so thin a partition between anarchy and civil Government,—and distorts the features of liberty, to the fierce effrontery of licence,—I refer to the records of History, and the theory of our Constitution. I compare the statement of the historian, with the doctrine of the constitutional lawyer; and learning from the former, that the table of the Scottish Parliament was crowded with addresses from counties, boroughs, and at last from parishes, against Union,—and collecting from the latter, † that Parliament was, notwithstanding, competent

* Mr Saurin's Speech of March 13th, 1800, published in the Anti-union Evening Post of March 15th, 1800.

† Blackstone.

competent to pass a valid act of incorporation, I am led at once to reject the principles, advanced by Mr. Saurin,—and deny that the populace, either by themselves, or by their tribunes, have a right to obtrude their prohibitory intercessions upon Parliament; or claim predominance, (still less supremacy,) in a mixed Government, such as ours. I am led to deny its being an admissible hypothesis,—a supposition which can, even for argument, be entertained,—that any Act of Parliament contravenes that publick sense, which the Legislature is alone competent to register and declare;—and which their Statutes, so far from contradicting, must proclaim.*

If the peculiar importance of the present measure be urged against me,—if it be sought to contrast it with more ordinary exertions of legislative power,—for the purpose of supporting by the contrast, those doctrines which I oppose,—in the *first* place, though it were possible, (which it is not†) to draw a line, and mark those cases, which lie beyond the jurisdiction of an all-competent Parliament, I yet must refuse, in any instance, or under any pretext, to admit the introduction of a principle, which at once destroys the balance of our Constitution—and depriving the Legislature of its unalienable powers, entrusts to the people, the supreme authority of the State. *Secondly*, I must maintain, that a blending of our Parliament with that of Britain, which leaves our civil liberty not only undiminished, but secured, while it expands, over the whole Empire, the political influence of Ireland, however momentous, and grand a measure it may be, yet is not one which, towards rendering it valid and effectual, can more require the sanction of the people, than many other Statutes, which could be mentioned. Not more than an act, which deprives the accused of trial by jury,—exposes him to imprisonment at the arbitrary will of the Government,—or subjects him to the despotic rigour of Military Law: in short than the Insurrection Law; the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act; or the Statute which has just passed, for reviving Martial Law: measures, which (under the warrant of that deplorable emergency which distinctness produced, and Incorporation would remove,) do really effect that, which is untruly ascribed to Union, and

* Every Act of Parliament is constructively, and by implication and intendment of law, assented to by all the members of the community; and so laid down to be, by all constitutional writers.

† I had occasion (if I may presume to quote myself) to notice this difficulty, in the Speech which I delivered in Parliament in the last year. “ But forsooth, it is only upon *extraordinary* occasions, that these millions of Ephori claim to review the decisions of their Sovereign Legislature; and deny the Competence of Parliament to make laws without their express consent. That is to say, the populace are, under certain circumstances, constitutionally entitled to dictate to their Parliament; and the same populace are to decide whether those circumstances have arisen. The populace is to resolve itself into a Committee of the whole Nation, to enquire whether the right of popular despotism has accrued; and by the report of this Mob, is their title to be ascertained.” Substance of my Speech, p. 45.

and operate a surrender of the rights and liberties of Ireland.* *Thirdly*, I must affirm the point to be decided, of a power in Parliament adequate to embrace and carry the proposed measure: decided by the authority of that Incorporation, whose validity all Constitutional Writers recognise;† and which an enlightened and patriotick Legislature passed—disregarding the biased and transitory wish,§ and consulting only the permanent interests of Scotland.

In a word I must lastly, and reluctantly, pronounce that the man who promulgates doctrines contrary to these, though his intentions be pure, his talents eminent, and his character respectable, as those of Mr. Saurin,—must yet be dangerous, in proportion to his influence, as a publick man; since he not only misconceives the principles of the British Constitution, but most perniciously attempts to undermine that legislative supremacy, which forms the base, without which no regular Government could stand.

* I am borne out in this assertion, not only by comparing the operation of these laws, with the provisions of that foundation of our liberties, Magna Charta,—but by the express words of Blackstone himself, who says that by suspending the Habeas Corpus Act, “the nation parts with its liberty “for a while.” (Vol. I, p. 136.)

† Blackstone, vol. I, p. 161.

§ Attested by numerous petitions against the measure.

